THE REFORMS AND RELIGIOUS IDEAS OF SIR SAYYID AHMAD KHAN

[SECOND REVISED EDITION]

BY

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

When in 1946 the study of the thought of Ahmad Khan was started, it was with the only intention to introduce the great Indian reformer to a European public. It never entered my head that this book would have any value for people in India or Pakistan. So it was a great surprise to hear from the publishing firm, Brill, that especially in Pakistan my thesis found a ready sale.

The initiative of Orientalia at Lahore to publish a second edition is laudable. Apparently Sir Sayyid's spirit is still alive, for it speaks well for broadmindedness to bring out in a Muslim country a work on Islamic studies composed by a non-Muslim. Methinks it to be wise too. Scientific work in the field of Islam is only done by a few; hence cooperation of research and interchange of acquired results between East and West is urgently wanted. It is the author's wish that somehow his book may contribute to advance this cause.

After five years, revisions were required. Some corrections could be made—thanks to the much etseemed remarks of critics—and some additions are inserted when because of fresh material a point or detail could be explained more fully. This refers particularly to the influence of Ahmad Khan on commentators of the Qur'ān after him.

I express many thanks to Mrs. Dorothy E. Rundorff, of the Minnesota University, who has been so kind to correct the English for this second edition.

August 1953 J.M.S. BALJON, JR.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

While European literature on Islamic Modernists in Egypt is daily increasing, the information about their colleagues in India, supplied by Western Orientalists, remains defective and insufficient. This applies in particular to Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

In 1885, still during his lifetime, a biography of Ahmad Khan[1] appeared from the pen of Lieut. Col. G. F. I. Graham who was an English friend. This work was written with much appreciation for the Indian reformer, but as its author keeps too closely to the chronical order, its contents are little surveyable. And a more essential defect is that inadequate attention is paid to the significance which Ahmad Khan had for his own people, while all the stress is laid on his loyalty towards the British.

However, this is the only existing biographical work, easily accessible to Europeans. There are various articles about him and sketches of him of which the fine article of H. Kraemer in *The Moslem World* (1931) and the interesting picture of him by W. C. Smith in his *Modern Islam in India* (1943) deserve special mention, but all these writings are based on Graham's biography and those of the works of Ahmad Khan which had been translated into English.

In this thesis we have tried to give an objective account of Ahmad Khan as a social, educational and religious reformer. Besides the primary sources, i.e. Ahmad Khan's own writings, ample use is made of the *Hayat i Jawid* (Eternal Life), the Urdu biography of Altāf Husain, better known under his *nom de plume*, Hālī, published in 1901. This work, of one of the nearest co-workers of Ahmad Khan, is a splendid storehouse

1. *Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan.*

full of possible data one may want to know. Only one ought to keep in mind that manifestly it possesses a tendentious character: it is one long uninterrupted eulogy, in which its writer handles a rich vocabulary of superlatives, but whereby purposely the weak sides of the great man are glossed over, as it is done in funeral orations. Yet the care and accuracy with which all the various details and things worth knowing are scraped together make it a historical standard work in Urdu literature.

As this thesis is submitted to the Faculty of Theology, particular notice has been paid to the religious sides of this man ; on the other hand, it appeared to us unwise to study the religious ideas of Ahmad Khan separately, as the latter became a theologian *in spite of himself*, i.e. the totalitarian character of Islam as such did not tolerate a disconnection of social and educational questions from the domain of religion ; and at the same time this reformer recognized that his introduction of modern knowledge and adjustment demanded a reinterpretation of this religion in order to counter a process of secularization.

This study, then, is offered not with the pretension to have exhausted the subject, but in the hope that it may lead to a better understanding of the great leader who dominated the community of Indian Muslims in the second half of the 19th century.

ABBREVIATIONS

H.J. : *Hayat i Jawid* (1901), the biography of Altāf Husain, called Hālī. This work consists of two parts ; the first gives a purely historical account, the second, a review of Ahmad Khan's life and work.

T.A. : *Tahzib al-Akhlaq* (when no date is connected with it, the quotation is derived from the edition of Fadl al-Dīn, part 2, in which all the articles of Ahmad Khan published in this periodical during 1870-76 are compiled).

A.M. : *Akhiri Madamin* (1898), a posthumous collection of essays of Ahmad Khan, dating from 1897 to his death (1898).

Tas. A : *Tasanif i Ahmadiyyah*. This is an uncompleted edition of Ahmad Khan's theological writings in 8 parts. Parts 3-8 contain his Qur'ān-commentary.

Tafsīr : *Tafsir al-Qur'an*. For it there is made use of the *Tasanif i Ahmadiyyah*, so that part 1 of the *Tafsir* corresponds with part 3 of the *Tasanif*, etc.

T.K. : *Tabyin al-Kalam*. This Bible-commentary has 3 parts. The first two appeared in a separate edition ; but for the third part recourse had to be taken to the *Tasanif*, part 2, so that e.g. T.K. 3, 44 agrees with Tas. A. 2, 44.

Usūl : *Tahrir fi Usul al-Tafsir*.

Essay on . . . : That means that the quoted essay is taken from Ahmad Khan's book, *Essays on the Life of Muhammad*.

Mujmū'a : 1—*Lectures ka Majmu'a* (1890), collection of lectures comp. by Muh. Sirāj al Dīn ; 2—*Majmu'a lectures* (1892), comp. by Sirāj al-Dīn Ahmad ; 3—*Mukammal majmu'a lectures wa speeches* (1900), comp. by Muh. Imām al-Dīn.

Graham : G. F. I. Graham, *Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan* (2nd ed. 1901).

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THIS SECOND EDITION

IS

DEDICATED

TO MY TEACHER

THE LATE MR. A. H. HARLEY

READER IN URDU

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Chapter 1

MILIEU AND NATURAL ABILITIES OF AHMAD KHAN

Sayyid Ahmad Khan[1] was born on the 17th October, 1817, at Delhi. At that time the conditions in this capital of the Mughal Empire were comparatively good ; at any rate they appeared so from the outside. As the city during the eighteenth century had been a favourite place for the looting and devastating hosts of rebelling vassals, whose attacks culminated in the raids of the barbarous Marhattas, at this juncture the benefits of the so-called *English Peace* became gradually appreciated. In 1803 Wellesley had captured Delhi from the Marhattas, and a firm rule was established. So for trade and agriculture the circumstances were rather favourable, and the general prosperity was increased. The city regained its gay atmosphere: "Festivals were common, and they were kept with great pomp and ceremonial. Processions through the city were almost daily occurrences during the marriage season, and immense sums of money were spent in wedding festivities and decorations. The daily intercourse and intermingling of the citizens in the streets were full of colour,

1. 'Sayyid' denotes his descent from Muhammad. He signed himself always 'Sayyid Ahmad'; but to use this designation may cause confusion as the well-known Indian Wahhabi Sayyid Ahmad (1786-1831) already bears this name. The Muslims of India till today like to call him after his two titles of honour "Sir Sayyid" (he was knighted in 1888).

variety and charm."[1]

The British had been wise in allowing the Mughal Emperor Shāh 'Ālam to retain his sovereignty within the area of his big palace, the 'Red Fort.' Also a large income was left to him, by which he could maintain an imaginary royal dignity; and everything was done to preserve artificially 'the grand manner' of the good old times. The elaborate court etiquette and the entourage of the Emperor were guarded with jealous and punctilious care. Gifts of homage and odes were presented to His Majesty, while the Emperor in his *darbars* (royal audiences) conferred titles of honour upon his subjects.

In spite of all this show, "the affairs of the administration, as far as they remained within the Emperor's power, went from bad to worse. The Emperor himself became the prey of greedy courtiers and sycophants, who used to flatter him and praise in extravagant terms his musical and poetic skill in order to obtain his bounty... The royal princes had their own way in state affairs. They quarrelled among themselves, while the old Emperor sank into senility and dotage."[2]

Close to this imperial court the young Ahmad Khan, who came of a Muslim family of high nobility, was reared. On the father's side he was descended from Muhammad, the Prophet, in the 36th degree.[3] His ancestors, oppressed under the tyranny of the Umayyads, fled to Damghān (Persia), and finally settled down in Herat (Afghanistan). It was probably

1. C. F. Andrews, "Zaka Ullah of Delhi" (1929), p. 5.

The temporary revival of Indian life in this second quarter of the nineteenth century must certainly not be overstressed. It was merely gilding, which concealed the actual state of affairs. And as soon as the storm of the Mutiny came to rage over India, the bare facts were manifested to the dazzled Indian Muslims, and they had to recognize that for some centuries they were already decaying, and that all the time they had lived on a glorious past which had gone for ever.

2. "Zaka Ullah of Delhi," p. 14.

3. For particulars of his family, youth, etc., see H. J. I, 15-47.

in the reign of Shāh Jahān (1628-1666) that the members of his family came to India, and were appointed to responsible posts. Their connection with the Mughal court continued until the nominal rule of Bahādūr Shāh II. Mīr Muttaqī, the father of Ahmad Khan, was not, however, a man of the world; his interest in derwish orders[1] was greater than in state affairs. Still he must have been a good friend of Akbar II. But later on his relations with the royal family weakened more and more.

The youth of Ahmad Khan was happy and cheerful. He learned archery and swimming from his father, who for the rest did not bother much about the education of his three children. Later on he enjoyed himself very much at the different festivals, as the Muslims also attended the Hindu feasts and these were very frequent. In his childhood he became familiar with the court life, and in his youth he was often present at the royal *darbars* to represent his father. The first instruction imparted to him consisted of lessons in reading of the Qur'ān from a governess. After that he attended a *maktab* (a kind of Muslim primary school), where he was taught some Persian, Arabic and mathematics. But this could not have been a very profound instruction,[2] because later on, at the age of about thirty, when his scientific interest was roused, he found it necessary to re-read the books he had studied in his early youth.[3] According to his own statement,

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1. Mir Muttaqi was a disciple of the "Pir" (spiritual guide) Shah Ghulam 'Ali, a far-famed anchorite of Delhi, and founder of the Benawa-order.

2. Hali, the author of Ahmad Khan's biography, "Hayat i Jawid," regards this imperfect instruction as a fortunate incident of his career, because "if he had completed his education on the old lines and the atmosphere of the old sciences had enveloped him, there could not possibly have been any capacity left in him for accepting a different atmosphere. He would have been bound to follow the old lines and scales of prejudice in quick succession would have covered over his eyes" (H. J. 2, 4-5).

3. See H. J. 1, 53.

as a boy he was not distinguished in any respect from his schoolmates except by his unusual physical strength And so apparently there was no indication that a great leader would develop out of this youth. Yet imperceptibly hidden powers were working to prepare him for his future momentous task.

In the first place the beneficial influence of *his mother in the formation of his character can hardly be over-estimated.* Since she also was of noble birth,[1] and grew up in circles where women were given quite a good education she knew some Persian, the language of Muslim culture. She did not observe various current tabu-inhibitions of Indian women, as for example that it would be improper to give children eggs or chicken to eat, nor did she believe in amulets and charmed cords. Her main talents, however, she displayed in the education of her children. One typical instance of her motherly wisdom is contained In the following anecdote told by Ahmad Khan himself: "Once, when I was eleven, I had laughed at an old servant for something. My mother heard of it. And when, after a short while, I went home, she said very angrily to me: 'Go away! You do not deserve to live here.' A maidservant took me by the hand, brought me outside and left me on the street. Just at that moment another maidservant came out of the house of my aunt, which was very near, and took me to my aunt. She said to me: 'Look here! My sister became very angry with you. Now I shall hide you in a place which you should not leave, otherwise she will grow angry with me

1. Her father, Khwajah Farid al-Din, was a politician who served the East India Company—in 1799 he was appointed an attache of an embassy sent by Lord Wellesley to Persia—as well as the Mughal court—in 1815 Akbar Shah II took him in his cabinet council and commissioned him to reorganize the finances of the imperial household. This post related to financial problems may have been allotted to him on account of his pronounced mathematic gifts. In his youth Ahmad Khan lived at the house of his maternal grandfather and thus he was in a position to observe from close quarters the activities of a statesman.

too.' For three days I was concealed in that house; the third day my aunt went to my mother to ask pardon for me. She answered: 'If he asks that servant for pardon, I too will forgive him.' Then I went home, and at the entrance of the house I begged pardon of the servant with clasped hands."[1]

An event which contributed greatly towards giving better direction to Ahmad Khan's life was the death of his father in 1838. The consequences of it were considerable. The income proceeding from some posts at the court had already decreased during his father's lifetime because of the latter's differences with a certain Rāja Sohan Lāl, a very influential person in the palace. Now, after Mīr Muttaqī's death the emoluments from the Red Fort were so small that almost nothing was left to Ahmad Khan's mother. In other words, because of impending poverty Ahmad Khan saw himself compelled to look for a post. He decided to enter the service of the East India Company, though his relatives did not approve this choice, probably because they considered it not in conformity with the honour of someone who was so closely attached to the Mughal court.[2] Hālī remarks in regard to this step: "... as Sir Sayyid had grown up in the shadow of the palace, it would have been quite natural if he had disliked the rule of a conquering people. But commonsense dominated his nature ... He recognized that it was not by accident that Muslim rule had gone, but that in fact it had lost the ability to rule ... and that therefore another people had to rule over India ... So instead of disliking the British government he regarded

1. H. J. I, 27.

2. Still he was not the first in his family who served 'the enemy'; his maternal grandfather Farid al-Din was in the beginning of the nineteenth century a "Wakil" (ambassador) in English service; and an uncle, Khalil Ullah Khan, was at that moment a "Sadr-amin" (sub-judge) in Delhi and it was he who introduced Ahmad Khan in the court of justice at Delhi.

it as an improvement upon Muslim rule."[1] It is questionable whether all these considerations led the 21-year old youth to take this decision, although certainly later on such arguments were used by him to justify his pro-British views.[2] But one thing is clear from this that Ahmad Khan was thus attracted early to the English sphere of action. Destiny pushed him into a totally different clime; from the isolated milieu of Muslim aristocracy he was transposed into the vast new world of Western civilization.

Another occurrence, which changed his conduct and had a good effect upon his character, was the death of his very beloved brother who was always his companion at the festivals and other places of amusement. "From that moment on (i.e. 1846) he shunned every form of merrymaking, and no longer cared for fine clothes and a well-groomed appearance."[3]

But though Ahmad Khan was more and more confronted with realities of life we must not expect that in the years 1838-57 he had an actual understanding of what was going on; he apparently committed the same fault as the Muslims did in general in seeking to escape reality by having recourse to dreams of the golden age when Islamic civilization flourished in India. Characteristic of this state of mind are the most important works he produced in this period, i.e. (i) the *Athar al-Sanadid* (1847), a description of the old buildings in Delhi and its environs, to which is added an account of famous persons who were once

1. H. J. 2, 238.

2. See his speech on the institution of the British-Indian Association (1867): "The rule of these former Emperors and Rajas was neither in accordance with the Hindu or Muslim religion . . . After this long period of what was but mitigated slavery, it was ordained by a higher power than any on earth that the destinies of India should be placed in the hands of an enlightened nation, whose principles were in accordance with intellect, justice and reason."

3. H. J. 1, 46.

inhabitants of Delhi[1]; (2) a recension of the *A'in i Akbari* (1856), the administration report and statistical return of the government of the great Mughal Emperor Akbar.[2]

The startling effects of the tumultuous days of the Mutiny[3] was the catastrophe necessary to bring about a radical and decisive change in Ahmad Khan's attitude towards life. And "just as the level of some stretch of water is heightened by the warmth of the sun, so by the heat of the Mutiny the temperature of his blood was raised above its normal level."[4]

In those days all the passions were kindled. Frenzy on account of injured religious feelings, stirred up by the hope of political independence was mixed with the low instincts of the tagrag and bobtail who saw their chance for plunder and massacre. Innocent European women and children were hacked to pieces in cold blood, but rebels also, when captured, were executed and subjected to "spiritual and mental tortures, to which we (i.e. the English) have no right to resort, and which we dare not perpetrate in the face of Europe."[5] In the end the Emperor Bahādūr Shāh II was arrested and sent into exile; Delhi, the pride of the Muslims, was destroyed and sacked. The logical result of it was that, to express it in the words of a British historian, both people became "estranged from each other"

1. This archaeological writing was translated into French by Garcin de Tassy in 1861. Since the attention of European scholars was drawn to him, he was elected an honorary Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society of London, three years later.

2. In the "Kulliyyat" of the celebrated Urdu poet Ghalib there is a review of it (see H. J. 1, 65). The author reproaches Ahmad Khan with wasting time, on the ground that to popularize English institutions was far more necessary to the age than the Institutes of Akbar.

3. The Mutiny is the great revolt of the Bengal army in 1857, accompanied by rebellion of the population in many parts in India and of some chieftains of India.

4. H. J. 2, 39.

5. W. H. Russell, "My Diary in India" (1860), p. 43.

more and more.[1]

All this did not fail to make a deep impression upon the loyal and, at the same time, patriotic sub-judge of Bijnore,[2] and in utter despair he thought of emigrating to Egypt. An idea of this mental perplexity can be formed from what he related about it at the Educational Conference of the 28th December, 1889. There he said: "At that time I considered it to be impossible that our people would prosper again, and would receive esteem any more; and I could not bear to behold the condition of the people. For some days I remained in this state of confusion and affliction. You may feel certain that this affliction made me *old and turned my hair grey*[3] .... *But at that* time this thought occurred to me that it would be very cowardly and unmanly to leave one's country in ruins, and to enjoy a comfortable life in privacy. No! I ought to participate in that misery, and it was my national duty to endeavour to relieve the miseries as much as I could. And so I gave up the intention to emigrate, and chose to work for my country."[4]

Like Moses, Ahmad Khan was suddenly faced with the immense task of uplifting a reluctant people from the very depths of its existence to a better future. Just as that leader of the Israelites was fitted to fulfil his calling due to his many talents, so Ahmad Khan was equal to his task of uniting a divided

1. Cf. E. Thompson and G. F. Garratt, "Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India" (1934), p. 461: "To Indians the Mutiny has remained a bitter memory. The extent to which this feeling has been ignored by English writers is a remarkable commentary upon the social estrangement between the two races"

2. Ahmad Khan entered the Civil Service as "Sarishtadar" (record writer) of the court of justice at Delhi. At regular intervals he was promoted, and during the Mutiny he was a "Sadr-amin" (sub-judge) in Bijnore.

3. He too had his share in the calamities of the Mutiny. His home was plundered, an uncle and a cousin of his were killed by the Sikhs, and shortly after the termination of the Mutiny his mother died, weakened in body and spirit by all the disasters.

4. H.J. I, 81.

community for a common purpose because of the rare combination of mutually complementary qualities such as being organizer as well as statesman, preacher as well as practician, a hard worker himself as well as a stimulator of others.

Here we shall try to describe his fine abilities and high character which enabled him to carry out the reforms his heart dictated to accomplish.

HIS COMMONSENSE

It was not simply from doggish affection for the English that Ahmad Khan made such abundant praise of English rule and declaration of his loyalty towards their government ![1] Although there is no doubt that he was upright in his admiration of their achievements, yet mainly his sense of reality told him that their cooperation was very essential for the success of his enterprises. In particular, the help and influence of Sir John Strachey, Lieut. Governor of the N.-W. Province, who appreciated Ahmad Khan very much,[2] appeared to be of great use for the realization of his projects.[3] Another aspect of his commonsense is that he

1. Here is an instance which indicates that Ahmad Khan was not so naive as to think that the English had come to India out of mere philanthropy: "Once Sir Sayyid asked a contribution for the Aligarh College from an unknown English traveller. The Englishman answered very bluntly that for this work he should ask support only from his own people. Then Sir Sayyid retorted: 'Indeed, we must stretch out the hand to strangers on account of the bad condition of our community; but it should be remembered that if this institution were started without the support of the English, there would be nothing more insulting for the English than this, that in spite of the fact that they derive numerous advantages from their rule over India, yet they do not assist in a cause which is for the benefit of the Indians alone" (H.J. I, 212).

2. See John Strachey, "India" (1888), p. 175: "I am proud to call him (i.e. Ahmad Khan) my friend, and there is no man for whom I feel a more true respect."

3. See H.J. I, 193-94, where it is related how the intervention of Strachey removed the obstruction on the part of the Collector in Aligarh concerning a piece of ground the latter did not want to free for building the college.

did not intervene in theological disputes from which it was already obvious that no result would be gained. When, for instance, "someone told Sir Sayyid that he wanted to write a treatise against Mirzā Ghulām Ahmad of Qadian, Sir Sayyid wrote to that person : "How did you get the fatal idea to wish to write a treatise against Mirzā Ghulām Ahmad ? There is *nothing in this* preposterous movement, and *I shall never take the trouble to* write anything about the reappearance of the *Messiah*[1] which is based on merely forged stories." [2]

HIS INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY

From the mere fact that Ahmad Khan enjoyed no Western schooling in his youth and that he made his own way in acquiring a knowledge of European civilization successfully, one can imagine that he must have possessed good mental equipment. His scientific work also shows that he was intelligent, and that he had a fine capacity for reproducing and interpreting what he learned from the West. Yet the foundation of his cultural and scientific acquisitions was too weak, his field of interest too wide and his tempo of production too fast to reach the lofty spheres of a thinker like Muhammad Iqbāl, or to attain to the profound thoughts of a theologian like Muhammad 'Abduh . . . And we shall see further on that his ideas are more appreciable for the boldness demonstrated in them than for maturity.

Perhaps his intelligence is most prominent in his remarkable quickness of wit, one of his most effective weapons with which to beat his adversaries. The following anecdote is a pleasant example of it: "Once a very clever and cunning Maulawī (a doctor of Muslim law) came to Sir sayyid, and said to him : 'I am longing to have a look at your Qur'ān-commentary. If you would lend it to me, I would appreciate it very much.' Sir Sayyid

1. A claim of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

2. H. J. 2, 536.

asked him: 'Do you believe firmly in the Unity of God and the prophethood of Muhammad?' He answered: 'Certainly I do!' Then Sir Sayyid continued: 'Do you believe in the resurrection, the last judgement, heaven and hell, and whatever else the Qur'ān says about life hereafter?' The Maulawī again answered: 'Certainly, I do!' Then Sir Sayyid said: 'Well, then my commentary is not for you. It is only meant for those people who either do not have a strong faith in these articles of belief, or who criticize them."[1] The subtlety lies in this that the objections of the Maulawī against Ahmad Khan's commentary were that the latter appeared no longer to believe in the resurrection, last judgement, heaven and hell.

AUTHORSHIP

Ahmad Khan suffered early from writer's itch.[2] The fertility of his pen is amazing. A compilation of all his articles, treatises, etc., would, roughly, fill at least 6,000 pages. A collection of essays, composed in the last year of his life, when he was in the eighties, and published under the title 'Ākhirī Madāmīn,' cover 150 pages . . . .

He wrote about everything: we meet, for instance, among his literary productions an account of the Mutiny in Bijnore; a treatise on the homoeopathic cure of cholera; a redaction of an introduction to mechanics; a biographical sketch of Muhammad's life; essays on political questions as well as on educational problems.

His style is simple and vigorous, free from artificial word-pictures and ornate diction. This was a healthy and revolutionary breach of the all too common style of Urdu writings, in which usually the authors surpass each other in intricate and obscure figures of speech. In our opinion Ahmad Khan's best

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1. H. J. 2, 542-43.
2. His first writings date from 1840 (when he was 23).

literary products are to be found in his periodical the *Tahzib al-Ahklaq*, during the period 1870-76. Simplicity here does not include a lack of literary beauty, and his essays in it, excelling in clearness of thought, are seasoned with pithy sayings, charming verses, and illustrative metaphors. But unfortunately the style in his more scientific works is nearly devoid of literary refinement, and there it fell a victim to his passion for close reasoning and well-ordered schemes. Often his argumentation is put into a framework which reminds one of the pattern schoolboys use for their geometrical riders, and which consists of "datum," "what is to be proved," "proof."[1]

HIS RHETORICAL TALENT

Though the influence of his popular writings is not to be neglected, Ahmad Khan gained a real hold over his people through his speeches. In them he put all the weight of his great personality in the scale in order to win supporters for his plans. And even from reading his speeches one can guess what the effect must have been, when the great old man at the climax of his address made his appeal to the audience, beginning with: "O my brethren!" J. Kennedy tells us that Ahmad Khan "could work up native audiences to the wildest enthusiasm," and that he had heard it said of him that "on one occasion the Mahomedans of Hyderabad rose from their seats, and dandled their swords, shouting before him."[2] According to Hali, Ahmad Khan's speeches were the most exciting "when he was informed of fierce opposition against his views, especially in educational affairs . . . Then his patience was no longer bridled, his voice echoed through the whole hall, and his opponents crept

1. To give an illustration of it from his Qur'an-commentary, an often repeated theme is as follows: ("datum") certain Qur'an-verses seeming to refer to an extraordinary event; ("what is to be proved") that in those verses nothing miraculous is mentioned ; ("proof") then some sophistication or other follows.

2. "Personal Reminiscences of Sir Ahmad," in Asiat. Quart. Rev. 1898.

away terrified."[1]

HIS NOBILITY OF CHARACTER

Among the preserved sketches of Ahmad Khan's life there are many which depict his high moral qualities. Some of them may be mentioned here:

(a) *Courage*: "When Sir Sayyid wanted to send his treatise *The Causes of the Mutiny* to the Parliament and the Government of India, a good friend of his advised him: 'Burn all these copies and do not expose yourself to danger.' Then Sir Sayyid replied: 'I consider it my duty towards the country, the people, and the government itself to bring these matters to notice. But if I suffer some harm for such a cause which is profitable for the Empire and its subjects both, I shall bear it.' When his friend, Rāja Jai Kishan Dās, saw that Sir Sayyid was wholly determined on it and that his advice had no effect upon him, he sat silent with tears in his eyes. Sir Sayyid performed some *ruku's* (a part of the Muslim ritual prayer) as a *nafl* (a supererogatory act), prayed, then sent a parcel with nearly 500 copies to the government in England."[2]

(b) *Modesty*: "Once one of the European professors of the Aligarh College proposed that yearly a founder's day should be celebrated, as was customary in English colleges. Sir Sayyid disapproved of this and said: 'The situation in our country is totally different from that in England. There a college can be established with even a single grant of Rs. 10,000 or 10,00,0,000; but here the only way to found a college is to collect subscriptions from thouasnds and tens of thousands of

1. H.J. 2, 436.
2. H.J. 1, 89.

History has proved that Das's fears were not baseless. When the book was discussed in the Viceregal Council, Mr. Cecil Beadon, the Foreign Secretary, called it 'highly seditious.' No action, however, was brought against the author.

people. So there is no reason why, when a college has been established with the contributions of the nation, such ceremonies should be connected with the name of a special founder. *In my opinion, therefore, a foundation-day should be fixed instead of a fouders-day.* "[1]

(c) *Patriotism* : "The day before the date on which a meeting had been fixed for the establishment of a committee for the promotion of education amongst the Muslims, I (the speaker is Muhsin al-Mulk, the best friend of Ahmad Khan) came to Benares. Sir Sayyid had spread my bed in his room. Till 11 or 12 o'clock we discussed the education of the Muslims. Then I went to bed. About 2 o'clock I awoke, but did not see Sir Sayyid on his bed. I went out of the room to look for him. Then I saw him walking up and down on the verandah, weeping bitterly. I asked him : 'Have you received some bad news.' When he heard this, he wept still more and said : 'Can there be anything worse than that the Muslims have gone and are going backwards, and that there is no way of improving them ? I have no hope that any result will come from the meeting of tomorrow ; this whole night I passed here thinking what would be the outcome of the meeting of tomorrow and whether some stir can be effected or not. "[2]

(d) *Non-vindictiveness* : "When in the *Rafiq i Hind* very grievous articles against Sir Sayyid were published and Munshi Sirāj al-Dīn, the editor of the *Sirmur-Gazette*, wanted to take up his pen in reply to them, Sir Sayyid wrote to him : 'I have read your paper of the 8th January. Truly I am thankful for the friendship which you show this worthless person, and in the matter of that article which appeared in that paper I consider that you are prompted by your great affection.

1. H.J. I, 220-21.
2. H.J. I, 173-74.

But let it go ; if anyone wants to say anything (against me), I do not take it ill. If he is pleased to abuse me, let him have that pleasure. "[1]

Hali tells us about his adored master : " The features of his face, the structure of his body, in short, the total impression he made was so overwhelming, that only from looking at him one guessed his inner grandeur."[2] Probably in his great personality we must seek the secret of the ultimate victory Ahmad Khan won over a community which persisted in its bigotry, and suspected everything new, and which was suffering from a great inferiority complex. Muslim India was longing for a leader whom it could venerate, whom it could trust, and who could restore its lost self-confidence. And in Ahmad Khan it found an honest man with high principles and a burning love for his country, and free from any evidence of self-interest.[3] Although at first it was hard for Muslims to accept his advanced ideas which had nothing in common with their own throught, and time was needed before they could perceive instinctively that he was working for their benefit only, and nothing else, eventually he became their acknowledged leader.[4] Thus when in 1887 Ahmad Khan

1. H.J. 2, 514.

2. H.J. 2, 444 ; cf. also Kennedy in his "Personal Reminiscences" : "His head was massive, his face pale, his hair and beard were white and he spoke in a voice singularly sweet and distinct. At first sight the most striking characteristics of the man were dignity and courtesy."

3. More than in Europe it is in India a condition sine qua non for the success of a national leader that his life should to some extent be in the eyes of his followers an example of self-sacrifice. Hali has several times declared that Ahmad Khan paid all the travelling expenses for the collection of money for the college out of his own income. A Muslim friend of mine supported his belief in the late Mr. Jinnah by stating that the latter met all personal expenses connected with the cause of Pakistan out of his own pocket. Here we have perhaps a reminder, if not a relic, of mediaeval saint-worship in India.

4. Typical for the attitude of most of his supporters is this avowal of Nazir Ahmad in a lecture on the occasion of the 8th anniversary of the

advised the Muslims not to join the Indian National Congress, the bulk of them simply did what he said . . . .

Anjuman Himayat i Islam, Lahore (1893): "I was never afraid to say this in the very face of Sir Sayyid and his apostles (and why should I have been afraid ?) that I consider not all but some of his beliefs to be wrong. But as I believe this, so do I also believe that he is not hypocritical, cowardly or false, and that he is so intoxicated with the love of his nation that if it be in his power, he will in the same way as he has already taken off his own turban, take off that of others to confer them upon Muslims." (The turban is a mark of distinction, and the presentation of one's turban to someone is a manner of conferring honour upon a person.)

Chapter 2

POLICY OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND ENGLISH

The British had perceived through the events of 1857 that they had underrated the forces latent in the Indian people and that the Home government had to keep a watchful eye on Indian affairs. The Crown took over the control of the Indian government from the East India Company after the Mutiny; Leaden Street had to give way to Whitehall ; and soon England regained its confidence in its rule over India.

The Hindus, accustomed to foreign rule since time out of mind, and breathing in a religious atmosphere which was characterized by syncretism and ability for absorption and which did not hinder them seriously in their approach to Western culture,[1] possessed enough flexibility to reassume their position of English subjects, and to make the best of it.

But it was the Muslims who in fact had to "pay the piper." Not only had the total liquidation of the Mughal Empire a paralyzing effect upon their minds and not only were they badly prepared to yield to the times due to the fact that their 'Ulama had not yet found a mitigated interpretation of the doctrine of

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1. Ahmad Khan also admits that the Muslims were more offended by the Christian aspect of the British government than the Hindus; see "Asbab i Baghawat i Hind" in the Appendices of H.J. p. 33 : "All these things (i.e. of supposed patronizing of the Christian religion by the government) shocked the Muslims more than the Hindus."

jihad (holy war), but it was also most unfortunate that after the *Sepoy-revolt* "the English turned fiercely on the Mahomedans as upon their real enemies."[1] The suspicion and thwarting they met with from the side of the representatives of the ruling power completed their fear of and aversion from modern progress and civilization.

It is the great merit of Ahmad Khan that he fully realized that, under these circumstances, all hope of recovery of his degraded Muslim community depended on a resolute decision to turn its face to the West, and that the way to attain this goal was to become on good terms with the English. He charged himself with the difficult task of being a mediator between these two groups who were so alienated from each other. He assured the Indian Muslims that friendship between them and a non-Muslim, if not based on faith but on a natural affection of each other (*hubb insani*), was tolerated by the *Shari'a* (Muslim divine law),[2] and that "enmity between Christians and Muslims on religious grounds is not possible . . that except Islam there is no other religion in the world which pays such respect to Christ and his guidance."[3] He assured the English that it was taught by Islam that "if through the will of God we are subdued by a nation which gives religious freedom, rules with justice, maintains peace in the country and respects our individuality and property, as it is done by the

1. A. C. Lyall, "Asiatic Studies" (1882), p. 239.

Ahmad Khan laments in his treatise "Loyal Muhammadans of India" (1860) : " When I read in these days the English newspapers which passed before my eyes and the books which were composed regarding that disturbance, I saw in each of them that if anybody in India was wicked or disaffected, it was the Muslim ; and there was no thorny tree planted in India, about which it was not said, that it was planted by a Muslim, and no fiery storm was raised which was not caused by a Muslim" (I, 3-4.)

2. See T.A. p. 118.
3. A.M. pp. 31-32.

British rule in India, we should be loyal to it "[1] : and that " a precedent for this doctrine of the Muslims is found in the Torah, where it is recorded that Joseph served Potiphar very obediently and faithfully, although the latter was an Egyptian, and not a Muslim,[2] as he did not observe the prescripts of Moses."[3]

As will be readily understood, immediately after the Mutiny the whole attention of Ahmad Khan was concentrated on this policy of reconciliation, and in order to appease the hot bloods he wrote the treatises: *Asbab i Baghawat i Hind* (Causes of the Indian Revolt),[4] and *Loyal Muhammadans of India* (its first part appeared in 1860, the second in 1861).

In the *Asbab* Ahmad Khan rejects the idea that anyone "ever had the slightest hope that the king of Delhi would revive the Empire. Through their eccentricities and follies, the (royal) family had lost all their esteem in the eyes of the world" (App.-H. J. 20).[5] The author denies the authenticity of a *fatwa*

1. In a sentence, cited from a letter of his to a high-placed Englishman in London, see H.J. 2, 333.

Even in the Middle Ages Ahmad Khan finds rather good relations stated between English and Muslims: " When during the Crusades the most bitter hostilities were roused the English had very little to do with it " (in an address to Mr. Blunt in 1884 ; see H.J. 2, 50).

2. This conception of Islam, " as old as the creation," is based upon the following theory of his : " Islam is the light of God Himself and it is eternal like His essence. That very light of Islam shone in Adam's breast, that very light of Islam lightened the hearts of Noah, Seth, Jacob, Abraham, Moses, St. John the Baptist, Jesus and all the prophets" ("Majmu'a" I, 225). This view, also advocated by other Muslims, is a further elaboration of the Qur'anic datum that the prophets before Muhammad had been taught a relative truth.

3. "Loyal Muhammadans of India," 2, 17.

4. It was written in 1858 ; in the next year 500 copies of it were printed and sent to the Indian and the Home governments. But it was fifteen years before it reached the general public ; in 1873 an English translation of it from the hand of Sir Auckland Colvin and G. F. I. Graham was published.

5. Hali has inserted the Urdu text of the "Asbab" in the Appendices of the H.J.

(judicial decision in a doubtful case of the *Shari'a)* on *jihad* which would have been spread in Delhi during the Mutiny [see App.-H.J. 22]. But in his opinion the real causes of the revolt were these: (1) Misunderstanding on the part of the people, i.e. misapprehension of the intentions of the government (e.g. they believed that the government intended to force Christianity and foreign customs upon them, and "everyone thought that the government appointed missionaries and maintained them at its own cost" [App.-H.J. 29]. (2) The passing of such laws and regulations and forms of procedure as jarred with or harmed the established customs and practice of India. [As a proof of it, Act 21 of 1850, passed in the Legislative Council, is mentioned[1] ; and the comment upon it by Ahmad Khan is as follows: "It was believed that this Act was issued especially to lure people to become Christians, because it was a known fact that the Hindu community does not accept converts. So for the Hindus this act brought no benefit. And if someone becomes a Muslim, he is forbidden by his (new) religion from inheriting property left to him by people of another creed. So no Muslim could profit by this act. To such men, however, who became Christians it offered great advantages". App.-H.J. 34-35.] (3) Ignorance on the part of the government of the conditions of the people, of their modes of thought and of life, and of the grievances through which their hearts were becoming estranged. (4) The neglect on the part of our government of such points as were essential to good government of India. [In his further explanation of this cause the

1. The text of this Act is: "So much of any law or usage now in force within the Territories subject to the Government of the East India Company, as inflicts on any person forfeiture of rights or property, or may be held in any way to impair or affect any right of inheritance, by reason of his or her renouncing, or having been excluded from the communion of any religion, or being deprived of caste, shall cease to be enforced as Law in the Courts of the East India Company, in the Courts established by Royal Charter within the said Territories."

author points to a want of friendly feeling towards the Indians on the part of the European officials, and he makes an appeal to them through Bible-texts : I Thess. 3 : 12 and St. Mt. 7 : 12 ; see App.-H.J. 46-47.] (5) The bad management of the army.

Less daring are his two small accounts of the *Loyal Muhammadans of India*, in which no grievances against the government are uttered. In other words, here Ahmad Khan confines himself to the " defence," and he spends all his efforts in placing his community in a better light.[1] An opinion of the purport and contents of these accounts can be formed from the following extract from the preface : "Surely, when a man is guilty of a culpable act, he is a wicked person. But when in this time of misfortune it occurs that his good works are also considered as bad and suspect . . . then the proverb 'one fish pollutes all water' can rightly be applied to this time of calamity . . . Under these circumstances I decided to start a publication of official notes relating to loyal Muslims, and especially to those who are in the service of the government, so far as they have come to my knowledge and I shall also mention the rewards and favours our equitable and impartial government bestowed upon them for

1. Undoubtedly Ahmad Khan made his views heard in English circles. At any rate many of the latter have acknowledged their mistake of regarding the Muslims as the actual agitators of the Mutiny ; cf. Sir George Campbell, " Memoirs of My Indian Career " (1893) 2, 292-93 : " The most obvious, popular and pressing theory is that the Mahomedans have rebelled (i.e. in the Mutiny) . . . I have exhausted every source of evidence open to me, and I have not only come to the conclusion that the case against the Mahomedans has been greatly exaggerated, which I have long suspected, but am now, contrary to my first expectation, convinced that the accusation against the Mahomedans in general is absolutely unjust—that there has been no general Mahomedan movement in India whatever " ; and E. Thompson and G.F. Garratt, "Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India," pp. 442-43 : " Most contemporary histories, letters and diaries dilate upon the racial bitterness displayed by the Muslims who were usually assumed to be the real instigators of the Mutiny . . . . Undoubtly the upper class Muhammadans had their grievances against a Government, which had superseded the Mogul Empire. It does not, however, seem that Muslims took a leading part in the Mutiny . . . . few Muhammadans of any standing were openly against the Government . . . . The bulk of mutineers were Hindu."

their loyalty, in order that the generosity, the justice and the patronage of our government may become better known, and all the Muslim subjects by reading it may become grateful to our government."

Not long after composing those two treatises Ahmad Khan obtained a new opportunity to show his skill in refuting false allegations levelled against the Muslims. While in Muradabad he heard that in some districts Muslim publications about the days of the Mutiny employed the term *Nasaara* to refer to the English, and that officials considered this rebellious, because they thought that, just as the Jews spoke contemptuously of Jesus as "the man of Nazareth" so the Muslims called the English "Nazarenes." This was a sufficient cause for Ahmad Khan to take up his pen instantly. In a short essay he argues that the term *Nasaara* is not derived from *Naasara* (Nazareth), but from *nasr* (help); and as a reference for this assertion he quotes from the Qur'ān S(ūra) 3 : 52, where Jesus asks his disciples to become "helpers of God."[1]

The *Tabyin al-Kalam* (commentary on the Bible), which should be considered against the background of his endeavours to bring the rulers and the ruled together, is a scientific work by Ahmad Khan that dates from this same period. It is written in a very mild tone, and it is as if on almost every page he wants to say to his co-religionists : "Look, what similarities there are between our faith and Christianity, the creed of the

1. See H.J. I, 101-03.

This derivation of Nasaara from nasr has also been suggested by other Muslim scholars [cf. A. Jeffery, "Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an" (1938) p. 280]. Although the question of the origin of this name, already known in pre-Islamic times, is exceedingly difficult to settle, yet the hypothesis of Ahmad Khan is highly improbable from a scientific point of view. On the other hand it is quite possible that A. Sprenger is right when he suggests : "Es ist sehr wahrscheinlich, dass Mohammad, welcher kein grosser Philolog war, glaubte, dass Nacara, Christen, ursprunglich Gehulfenschaft bedeute und deswegen die Junger Jesu und auch seine eigenen so nannte" ["Das Leben und die Lehre de' 'ohammad" (1869) 2, 533].

English."[1]

A prejudice of the Indian Muslims, which was largely influenced by Hindu custom, was the opinion that it was unlawful to eat with Christians. And as a matter of course this turned up as a great obstacle to social intercourse between Muslims and the English. Ahmad Khan recognized that the most efficient way to eradicate this erroneous idea would be an argument based upon the sacred Islamic writings and the statements of authorities in the Muslim world. And so in 1868 a nicely documented theological treatise called *Ahkam i ta'am i ahl i Kitab* (Rules for eating with the people of the Scriptures) appeared from his hand. His pleading finds its strongest support in the Qur'ānic verse : "This day (all) the good things are legalized to you, and the food of those who have been given the Scriptures is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them" (S. 5 : 5). But *fatwas* also could be adduced as arguments ; e.g. this fatwa of Shah 'Abd al-'Azīz[2] of Delhi : "The rule for eating with Englishmen at the same table and from the same dishes is this, that if there appears something impure, like wine, pork, golden and silver dishes . . . . , it is forbidden ; . . . but if there are no impurities, it is permitted."[3] A delicate point in the affair was, however, the prescript of the Qur'ān, that Muslims are forbidden to consume meat on which any name other than that of Allah has been invoked, as well as flesh from animals killed by strangling (see S. 5 : 3). One could not expect that English hosts would serve such *kosher*-meat. Still Ahmad Khan knew a way out, and in reply to the objection of people who said "that only when an animal is slaughtered in the Muslim way is it pure (*halal*), and that there

1. For further particulars of this work, see ch. 6.

2. The title of honour of the influential Mufti living in the beginning of the nineteenth century : Ghulam Halim b. Qutb al-Din Ahmad.

3. Tas-A. 2, 134.

is no certainty whether it is so or it is not so, when it is slaughtered in an English home."[1] Ahmad Khan quotes a *hadith* (tradition) from the collection of traditions of Abu Dā'ūd, in the chapter "Animals slughtered by the people of the Scriptures," where it says: "God has said: 'Eat from that over which the name of Allah has been mentioned.' He made, however, one exception to this (rule), and He said also: 'Food coming from the people of the Scriptures is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them.' "[2]

It has been proved that this writing of Ahmad Khan produced a good result, and Hālī states: "Now (i.e. in 1901) one can see it is common for Muslims to eat with the English."[3]

In the beginning of the seventies a new critical situation was created for the Muslim community because of these facts: (*a*) the assassination of J. P. Norman, Chief Justice of the Calcutta Supreme Court, on the 21 Sept., 1871, by a Muslim of the Punjab; (*b*) the troubles which seditious Wahhābīs on the N.-W. Frontier caused the English troops. Involuntarily these things reminded the English of the dangerous revolution of 1857 and all its unpleasant implications, so that the formidable thought arose: "Can we really rely upon the Muslims?" A comprehensive study of this sore point was made by the Director-General of Statistics, Dr. W. W. Hunter, and published under the signficant title *The Indian Musalmans: are they bound in conscience to rebel against the Queen?* (1871).

Dr. Hunter's view in short is this: "The present genera-

1. Tas-A. 2, 139.

2. Ibid., 2, 141. For Ahmad Khan's solution of the problem of eating strangled hens, see note: In his "Musafiran i London" . . . . (serially No. 8 of chap. 5).

3. H.J. 2, 270. Cf. also Ja'far Sharif-Herklots, "Islam in India" (1921), p. 316: "Among the more learned and enlightened Musalmans it is now generally admitted that there are no grounds for their refusal to eat with the people of the Book."

tion of Musalmans are bound, according to their own texts, to accept the status quo" (p. 138), but "the Law and the Prophets can be utilized on the side of loyalty as well as on the side of sedition" (p. 120)[1] and "the Musalmans of India are, and have been, for many years, a source of chronic danger of the British Power in India" (p. 43, "and no one can predict the proportions to which this Rebel Camp (i.e. on he N. W. Frontier), backed by the Musalman hordes from the Westward, might attain under a leader who knew how to weld together the nations of Asia in a Crescentade" (p. 66).

Within a few months after the publication of Hunter's *Indian Musalmans,* Ahmad Khan issued a Review of it in the form of articles which appeared in the authoritative English paper of N.-W. India *The Pioneer.*[2] The most interesting passage in this Review is the one in which the author expresses his views on the campaigns of the Indian Wahhābīs. Some lines from the end of it are cited here: "It is true that these two (i.e. the Wahhābī chiefs 'Ināyat 'Alī and Wilāyat 'Alī of Patna) never slackened their efforts to induce men of Patna and the vicinity to join in the *jihad* . . . Now Dr. Hunter has made out that it was with the intention of waging war with the British that they again resorted to the frontier, and that they thus transferred the *jihad* from the Sikhs to the British. Was this likely when they had no cause of complaints against the latter? We have already seen in the oppression of Muslims by the Sikhs, what reason the former had for

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1. Cf. C. Snouck Hurgronje, "Politique Musulmane de la Hollande" (1911): "Dans le territoire de l'Islam meme, le souverain non musulman est une anomalie: on ne peut le supporter qu'aussi longtemps qu'on est impuissant a reagir" (Verspreide Geschriften, IV², 233).

2. These articles were reprinted in the "Aligarh Institute Gazette" from 24 Nov. 1871 to 23 Febr. 1872; and in the course of 1872 they were collected in a separate edition, from which the quotation here has been taken.

attacking the latter; but no reason has yet been shown, either by Dr. Hunter, or by anyone else, for this sudden hatred to the British. No, it was against the Sikhs in Jammu that their arms were directed" (p. 18). From these few sentences one can clearly understand that this writing bears more the stamp of a refutation, if not a polemic, than of a review.

That it happened to be the Wahhābīs who gave evidence of disloyalty toward the British government must have been very painful for Ahmad Khan, because he felt much sympathy for their reforming aims at purifying Islam from superstitious thoughts and practices. Certainly it was not merely in jest that once Ahmad Khan, when asked about his religion by an English official in search of the dangerous Wahhābīs, declared: "I am a Wahhābī."[1] In an article on the Wahhābīs which appeared in the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* of the 2 Febr., 1889, and in which he admits that "obscure" (*mushtabih*) occurrences on the border of N.-W. India gave the English occasion for suspicion of those people, he says *i.a.*: "I hope that people of that sect who call themselves Wahhābī, and whose doctrines are very strict and correct and who rely fully on the Unity of God, will be also very strict in this doctrine that one can never oppose a government of which one is a subject—whether the government is represented by Christians, or by Jews, or by pagans—as long as it does not interfere in religious matter."

Just as in the above-mentioned writings, Ahmad Khan tried to put his ideas of *rapprochement* into shape by means of the foundation of a British Indian Association for the N.-W. Provinces in 1866. Its aim was laid down in its second and third by-laws which run as follows: "(2nd) The leading aim and object of this Association shall be to improve the efficiency of the British Indian Government and to promote its best inter-

1. H. J. I, 183.

ests by every legitimate mean in the power of the Association; and this shall be done with a view to benefit the Natives of the country and other permanent settlers in it, thereby advancing the common inrerests of Great Britian and India. (3rd To this end the Association shall from time to time draw the a'tention of the government to redress and amend such already existing measures as appear likely to prove injurious to the interests of the country, or to adopt such other measures as may be calculated to promote those interests, whether viewed in relation to law and jurisprudence or trade and agriculture, or the general condition of the people." So lofty its purposes, so poor its results! The Association existed no longer than a year, and the recorded achievements are only: 'Remova of travel-inconveniences passengers had to face; deduction of tax on books; the ventilation of problems connected with the establishment of a vernacular university."[1]

By his own free intercourse with Europeans Ahmad Khan brought into practice what he was preaching,[2] at the risk of being blamed for it by his own people. But the plainest and most courageous proof of his teaching of reconciliation was his decision to accompany his son Sayyid Mahmud to England, when the latter received a scholarship from the government for study in that country. When, amongst the various abusive epithets our hero received in the course of time from his opponents, also that of "Christian" is found, then its origin can be explained as being a reference to this journey to Europe. A clear indi-

1. H. J. 2, 47.

2. In this connection the statement of E. Carpenter, made in his "From Adam's Peak to Elephanta" (1892), deserves to be cited here: "Aligurh— This place affords a striking example of a rapprochement taking place between the rulers and the ruled. It is the only place in India which I have visited where I have noticed anything like a cordial feeling existing between the two sections; and this is due to the presence here of the Mahomedan Anglo Oriental College" (p. 276).

cation of it is contained in this pleasant anecdote : "A few days after the occasion on which Sir Sayyid obtained in England the title of C.S.I., Raja Jai Kishan Das received the same title in India at Aligarh. All the ceremonies were performed in the big hall of the Society. When these were finished and all the friends of the Raja congratulated him, a servant of the Society heard everyone pronounce the letters C.S.I. and being very astonished he ran outside and said to the other servants : 'O my friends, that is a curious thing. It is understandable that Sir Sayyid, who went to London, has become a Christian, but what on earth has happened to Raja that he has become a Christian in India in the midst of a full assembly?' (When this servant heard the people pronouncing the letters C.S.I., he took it for *'isa'i*, an Urdu word for Christian.)"[1]

After his journey to England (1869-70) and his writing a Review of Dr. Hunter's *Indian Musalmans*, Ahmad Khan practically left the political field ; the base was laid, and from now on he could devote his attention to his actual task, viz. the social, educational and religious reform of his community.

1. H. J. I, 157.

Chapter 3

AHMAD KHAN'S SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL WORK

(a) THE SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS

The social conditions of Muslim India in the middle of the nineteenth century reflected manifestly the political events : the lost supremacy over India—however weak and ridiculous it might have been at the end—implied a sudden blow to the general welfare of the Muslim community. The gradual resumption of rent-free tenures by the English government reduced many landowners to poverty. The custom under the old regime of bestowing *jagirs* (grants in land and villages), which were the easily gained "dividends" of the upper class in an Oriental empire, had been abolished. The benevolent distribution of high posts in the Mughal government amongst the Muslim gentry had ceased.[1] And it was now far below the dignity of this old aristocracy to do the remaining "dirty jobs" which the ruling

1. About Bengal this statement is made by W. W. Hunter in his "Indian Musalmans," p. 167 : "The proportion of the race which a century ago had the monopoly of Government, has now (i.e. in 1871) fallen to less than one-twentythird of the whole administrative body." And in this province, where the number of Muslims and Hindus is nearly equal, the proportion of Muslims in government service to Hindus was less than one-seventh at that moment !

class used to reserve for "that poor fellow the Hindu."[1] If the worst came to the worst, so that at last some of the Muslims had to accept a small office in the new government, it turned out that their industry was in general less than that of their Hindu colleagues.[2]

The lower classes too suffered in the changing times, and the Muslim *ryots* (peasants) especially were disturbed in their peaceful existence, when the social order in their villages was uprooted by a system which did not suit their clanship. The ultimate outcome of it was that they became the ready prey of the sly Hindu moneylender. This unhappy course of events has been cleverly described by S.S. Thorburn in his *Musalmans and Moneylenders in the Punjab* (1886), from which some sentences are cited here : (p. 60) ". . . . the relations between debtor and creditor were determined under the Mahrattas without reference to any legal means of enforcing payments of debts." (p. 49) "The proprietary unit was the tribe, or community collectively. Alienations of cultivating right, unless approved by the whole body of share-holders, were impossible . . . The creditor trusted chiefly to the honesty and good faith of his debtor . . . In agricultural villages, the relations between the moneylenders and the cultivators were those of mutual interest and confidence . . . Under our system this happy and mutually advantageous state of affairs has been completely overturned. The prosperity of the ryot is no longer necessary to the prosperity of the village

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1. Cf. Sayyid Abul Fazal's "On the Muhammadans of India" (1872), p. 7: ". . . in spite of the pinch of penury which makes them (i.e., the original well-to-do Muslims) from day to day more wretched, they affect to display their spirits and dislike employments, whether public or private, not because they are unfit, but because to be employed is supposed by them to be dependent, and to be dependent is to their consideration diminution of their past honour and the dignity of their ancestors."

2. Cf. "Majmu'a of Lectures of Nazir Ahmad," p. 83: "I (i.e. Nazir Ahmad) heard from a Muslim deputy collector that when in his office a place of a clerk was vacant, he took for it a Hindu, for in his opinion a Hindu was a good worker who did not shrink from labour."

moneylender. The moneylender has the ever-ready expedient of a suit at law to obtain complete command over the person and property of his debtor... So long as a ryot is not much involved, the moneylender is ready to afford him the means of indulging in any extravagance.... The simple and thoughtless ryot is easily inveigled into the snare."

Besides these untoward political and economic factors, the psychological atmosphere too was unfavourable to prepare a mood ready to accept novel views. "The Muslim hates change. The ideal life and the ideal community are static. The West expects change to be for the better; the Muslim knows it to be for the worse."[1]

The conservative trends in the Muslim mind became particularly manifest in the field of education. Imperturbably year after year, century after century, the same subjects with the same text-books were taught in the *maktabs* (Arabic writing-schools) and *madrasahs* (Arabic colleges). Arabic grammar had to be learnt with all its subtleties. Complete courses of reading were given in rhetoric, logic and law along with instruction in details of religious precepts and in the fundamental tenets of Islam. It was all on the same footing as in the Middle Ages: Euclid and Ptolemy were still the approved guides for geometry and astronomy; logic was imparted along the lines of Aristotle, etc.

The struggle of the Hindus to give up deeply-rooted socio-religious customs was perhaps as hard as the fight of the Muslims to attune the *Shari'a* to a modern standard of requirements and values. In the speed with which they became accustomed to the changing teaching methods and courses, however, the former outstripped the latter in every respect. In India it was the Hindus, and not the Muslims, who set out to acquire knowledge in order to improve their conditions.

1. G. E. von Grunebaum, " Medieval Islam " (1946), p. 240.

In a Report of the Education Commission in India inquiring into the state of education among Muslims in 1882, three points are enumerated to elucidate the causes of the conspicuous difference between Hindus and Muslims : (1) While the young Hindu can start immediately with secular learning, the young Muslim must first spend some years in going through a course of sacred learning in the mosques. The Muslim boy, therefore, enters school later than the Hindu. (2) The Muslim parent often chooses for his son, while at school, an education which will secure for him an honoured place among the learned of his community, rather than one that will command success in modern professions or in official life. (3) The Muslim parent belonging to the better classes is usually poorer than the Hindu parent in a corresponding social position. He cannot afford to give his son a complete education.

To these three causes can be added the frank avowal of Sayyid Mahmūd that "a candid Muhammadan would probably admit that the most powerful factors (i.e. accounting for the backwardness of Muslims in English education) are to be found in pride of race, a memory of bygone superiority, religious fears,[1] and a not unnatural attachment to the learning of Islam."[2]

Though the causes of the disintegration of the Muslim community might have been different in its various sections, the visible result was everywhere the same,—i.e. the impression

1. The Hindu attitude to the Mission schools (and nobody can deny that generally speaking in the middle of the nineteenth century the Missions provided the best education in India) was less suspicious than that of the Muslims, for " the personality of Christ gave the Hindu much that enriched and sweetened his life without destroying its foundations. The Mohammedan found in this creed a direct challenge to the teaching that underlay his life" [A, Mayhew, "The Education of India " (1926), p. 47].

2. Syed Mahmood, " History of English Education in India " (1895), p. 148.

which the average Muslim made at this time upon the outside world was that of an arrogant and bigoted man for whom one could only feel disdain and antipathy.

(b) HIS SOCIAL IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES

Although the Mutiny had awakened in Ahmad Khan the desire to improve the worldly conditions of his people, yet it was not at once clear to him how to give shape to this noble intention. It was during his stay in England that he discovered means for the realization of it. There, he was immediately moved by the striking contrast between the standard of civilization of the ordinary Englishman and that of his country-fellowman. Pondering over it he came to the conclusion that these conditions were primarily due to a mental disease which required a treatment conformable to it. Soon after his return to India he started a periodical entitled *Tahzib al-Akhlaq* (Social Reform) which should serve that purpose. Its pattern was the English magazines of the beginning of the eighteenth century, *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.[1] In its first issue of the 24th December 1870, Ahmad Khan announces its programme as follows: "The aim of publishing this periodical is to make the Muslims of India desirous of the best kind of civilization, so that it shall remove the contempt with which civilized peoples regard the Muslims, and the latter shall become reckoned among the respected and civilized people in the world." The author ascribes the origin of this contempt for Muslims to the following factors: "Many old stories of the Jews and many ideas and doctrines of the Roman Catholics as well

1. The former is well known for the brilliant essays of Steele on general questions of manners and morality, while in the latter it was mainly Addison who educated the public by his "humorous sketches of social eccentricities, his good-humoured satires on ridiculous features in manners and on corrupt symptoms in public taste" ("Encycl. Brit." I, 185).

as those of an old Christian sect which existed for a long time in Arabia, and numerous rites and customs of the Hindus are adopted by us Muslims . . . and this is the reason why non-Muslim peoples, by identifying Islam with the total of all these things, have a very low opinion about Islam"; and he states that it is the task of the *Tahzib al-Akhlaq* to find out "why we adopted these things, how they arose amongst us, and in which way we should abolish everything which harms and obstructs civilization."

In the later articles Ahmad Khan contributed to the *Tahzib*, he reveals himself as a born moralist who never becomes tired of expounding on what people should and should not do. The first popular evil on which he lays his finger is prejudice, about which he declares : "This is such a serious fault that it ruins all the good qualities of man . . . It happens many times that someone considers a certain deed to be very important and beneficial, but merely on account of prejudice he does not perform it, and knowingly he remains entangled in evil and keeps himself from what is good . . . Art and sciences are such important things that through them everything must reach a very high point of accomplishment, but prejudice obstructs the development of anything by means of art and sciences." Closely related to prejudice is reactionism, against which the next attack was directed : "To be fettered by customs is everywhere an obstacle to human progress, as it has such control over human nature that through it one continuously fails to aim at something that would be of more use, and it is the first cause of the downfall of mankind."[1] Then he appears to be an adversary of asceticism, which in many cases did not originate out of pure religious motives, but out of a certain lust for self-mortification in order to endure, or rather to "enjoy," the poverty to which the

1. T.A. 26.

people were reduced. Ahmad Khan describes this devotionalism as wasted energy without lasting benefit, and in his admonition he points to "the example of prophets sent by God in order that these eminent servants of His should be a source and repository of the best virtues, and that they should give lasting benefit, and so to work for the welfare of mankind is to take over the heritage of the prophets."[1]

Such paternal exhortations are interchanged with persuasive inducements to ethical excellences, like fellow-feeling, liberal-mindedness, as well as with instruction on very practical matters, such as the principle of self-help, punctuality, etc.

In 1876 this periodical was stopped, mainly because Ahmad Khan, who was its driving power, became too occupied with his work for the completion of Aligarh College. As regards the effect it produced, Hālī states : ". . . bit by bit its effect was seen in a limited circle of Muslims. Illiterate people, who always outnumber educated people in a declining community, did not even know whereform the name *Tahzib al-Akhlaq* was derived. It was rejected by the Maulawīs because they thought that it was not only injurious to religion, but perhaps also to their position. It was very difficult to bring it to the notice of the nobility, for it was as hard to show them that the Muslims were going backwards as it is to warn water-fowl of a tempest. So the influence of the *Tahzib al-Akhlaq* was restricted to middle-class people who were neither ignorant, nor yet skilled in all sciences."[2]

At the instance of old friends of this periodical Ahmad Khan re-issued it twice in the nineties. In the first number of its first reappearance, dated 7th April 1894, he says, i.a. "The time

1. T.A. 48-49.

In a later article entitled "The Poverty of the Muslims" (T.A. 567, et seq.) Ahmad Khan repudiates the preachers of asceticism who "eagerly accept gifts from their disciples, but profess with their lips that the world is perishable and meaningless."

2. H.J. I, 169-70.

the death of his wife or upon a special event, then in some cases it would urge the man to illicit actions and in some cases he would no longer observe civic virtue. So to allow polygamy for man in special circumstances was in accordance with human nature and based upon great benefits." [1]

(*b*) *Slavery* On this subject Ahmad Khan published a separate treatise entitled *Ibtal i Ghulami* (1893) (Abolition of Slavery), the substance of whose argument is that Islam did not abolish slavery immediately; in the beginning it existed like other pre-Islamic customs which were not repealed all at once. It prohibited, however, the making of new slaves, and for the slaves still present many regulations were fixed with a view that bit by bit they should be released. This was very wise, because if really the slave had been freed *a l'instant*, how many troubles, nay abuses, would have come out of it ! And when in the Qur'ān rules are found for the treatment of slaves, then they are all meant for those slaves who where still present in the first period of Islam. The great turning-point, however, was the revelation of the "verse of release"[2] : S. 47 : 4 : "So when you meet those who disbelieve, (let there be) striking of their heads until when you have made great slaughter among them, take prisoners, release them out of kindness

1. "Tafsir," 2, 105.

2. The name as well as the rule derived from this verse is Ahmad Khan's patent And no other Muslim Modernist who was not his pupil has dared to produce such a radical statement as regards the Qur'ānic teaching of slavery. Usually Islamic reformers confine themselves to pointing out what Islam has done in favour of the slaves, e.g. that it has put a limit to slavery : only prisoners of war could be enslaved, etc ; and that after all it paved the way for the emancipation of slaves. Cf. Syed Ameer Ali, "The Life and Teachings of Mohammed, or the Spirit of Islam" (1891), p. 379 : "Islam did not 'consecrate' slavery, as has been maliciously affirmed, but provided in every way for its abolition and extinction by circumscribing the means of possession within the narrowest limits" ; and Ahmed Chafik Bey, "L' Esclavage au point de vue musulman" (1888), p. 47 : "la religion musulmane . . . recommande a son maiter . . . . de le marier ou l'epouser, afin de hater par cela meme son affranchissement."

or in return for ransom, until the war terminates." Since that moment, i.e. after the conquest of Mecca in A.H. 8, enslavement was completely forbidden to the Muslims.

(c) *Prohibition of Riba (usury, interest).* This question is dealt with in his comment on S. 2 : 275, "they who return (to usury) shall be given over to the fire, to abide therein for ever," where he says : "Before this *riba*-verse God speaks about the virtues of those who spend their money for the cause of God (i.e. verse 262) . . . . After it God speaks about the people who spend their money for the poor and about their recompense (i.e. verses 273-74), and along with them He mentions the people who take usury, *instead of treating* (their needy debtors) kindly and mercifully (i.e. verse 275) . . . . Therefore it is clearly proved by the context that that *riba* is forbidden which is taken from poor people. . . . . Besides this, however, there are people of standing who are rich and well-to-do and borrow money at interest for a life of ease and comfort and who purchase with it estates or build houses . . . . In my opinion there is no reason to regard the taking of interest from those people to be prohibited by the Qur'ān . . . In a similar way there are many loan-affairs which are arranged in trade and in business . . . . and by which trade, national welfare and prosperity are supported ; in the case of those affairs where interest is taken and given, I do not believe that it is a kind of interest forbidden by the Qur'ān. Certainly there have been *fuqaha* (lawyers) who have added many conditions to it on their own authority (*ijtihad*) and deduction (*qiyas*) and whose rules for interest have hindered severely the development of trade. Those regulations, however, cannot be based upon the Qur'ān."[1]

(d) As to the Prescript "to cut off the hands for theft," stated in S. 5 : 38 : "And as for the thief, whether man or woman, cut off

1. "Tafsir," I, 306.

their hands in recompense for their deeds," see his comment on S. 5 : 33 : "Only, the punishment of those who war against God and His Prophet and strive to make mischief in the land, is that . . . . alternate hands and feet should be cut off or they should be banished the land."[1] At that place Ahmad Khan states : "Neither are the rules for cutting off hands and feet in this verse, nor is the rule for cutting off a hand in case of theft in that other verse (i.e. verse 38) obligatory (*lazim*) ; and people, who think so, take a wrong deduction from the prescripts of the Prophet, for : (1) in this verse in which there is an option between cutting off the hands and feet and imprisonment, one is confronted with a choice between two punishments ; (2) when by all the *fuqaha* a certain amount of stolen goods was stipulated in a case in which a hand or a foot should be cut off, then it also follows from this that they did not consider them obligatory rules ; (3) we have good evidence to assume that already at the time of the Companions hands were not cut off, and that only punishment by imprisonment existed." [2] According to the author, this bodily punishment is only required "when a country cannot afford the luxury of a prison-system . . . . Then one must have recourse to bodily punishments in order to stop criminality and to maintain peace for men, though it is a barbarous punishment."[3]

(*e*) As to *jihad*, see *Tafsir*, 1, 234-35 and 238-39 : "Many people criticize Islam because it would not recognize for-

1. The expression here " to be banished the land " Ahmad Khan does not want to take in a literal sense, " because if brigands, highway robbers and thieves were to be brought elsewhere, one would never be safe from their crimes," and, like Abu Hanifa, he understands by it imprisonment.

2. "Tafsir," 2, 200-01.

Cf. H.F. Amedroz in "J. R. A. S." 1910, p. 793 : " As regards the 'hudud ' jurisdiction there seems to have been some reluctance to inflict the fixed penalty allotted to theft. Abu al-Darda, one of the Companions, advised a woman accused before him of that offence to deny it."

3. "Tafsir," 2, 202.

bearance, tolerance and humility, and that Muslims would not allow other people to differ from them in religious doctrines .... But this is a great error and sign of ignorance .... Certainly there were Muslim caliphs and kings who, laying religion aside, behaved very badly and acted very unjustly in order to indulge their passions and to conquer countries : and in support of them Islamic divines produced doctrines which were irreconcilable with the spiritual purity of Islam." (Pls. 238-39) ; "Islam does not allow offensive, not does it sanctify the conquest of countries and subjection of people in order that Islam should be spread by force[1] .... Only in two cases does it permit the drawing the sword : (1) when unbelievers through enmity against Islam and for the extirpation of Islam—and not for territorial conquests—attack the Muslims (wars caused by desire for territorial conquests, whether between two Muslim peoples, or between Muslim and unbelievers, are temporal affairs, which have nothing to do with religion) ; (2) when in a country the Muslims are not allowed to live in peace and to fulfil their religious duties. These are cases that call for war which is called *jihad*."[2]

Strangely enough, there was one great social abuse which Ahmad Khan left as it was viz, the *pardah* (seclusion of women). About this he says : "Many articles appeared

1. Nowadays the relatively respectable religious tolerance of Islamic rulers is generally admitted by Western scholars ; cf. e.g. G. F. von Grunebaum, " Medieval Islam," p. 178 : " This (i.e. official Medieval Muslim) attitude to the people of the Book, as Jews and Christians are called, does not entail any obligation on the part of the Muslim either to convert or to exterminate them. And it is here that Islam's reputation as a religion of toleration arises. This reputation is undoubtedly justified inasmuch as both Christians and Jews are permitted to profess their own religion."

2. Probably it is scarcely necessary to observe that scholars who do worry about Apologetics of Islam do not arrive at exactly similar conclusions about the " jihad " doctrine ; cf. e.g. Majid Khadduri, " The Law of War and Peace in Islam " (1940), p. 30 : " In more precise and technical language the Jihad may be stated as a doctrine of permanent war . . . It is a state of war against the unbelievers until the world would be islamized."

in various newspapers on the *pardah* of women, and some of my dear friends whom I call 'flesh of my flesh,'[1] and some of our leaders whom we call the pride of our community, are against *pardah*. Although people think me to belong to the *new fashion*, and although I am not of the old school, yet I am still conservative by nature and I disagree with the opinion of my friends and those leaders, and I consider the *pardah* which is customary among the Muslim women, as the best we can have."[2]

A plausible explanation for this conservative feature of our reformer is the reason which Hālī adduces for it, viz. "the conditions of the female society in his family were good in comparsion with those in most Muslim families ; female relatives of mine (i.e. Hālī) were good friends of the women of his family and they praise the high standard of their social life, education and character."[3]

The efforts of Ahmad Khan to reform Muslim social life were almost limited to fighting the notions of Muslims which were incompatible with the new era, and this occupation was not concerned with practical issues. It was the settled conviction of this man that his community was not yet ripe to profit in a proper way by fine social institutions and regulations, and "that as long as there was no widespread education in India, all the plans for the welfare of India would be useless and ineffective."[4]

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1. Supposedly he is hinting at Nazir Ahmad and Muhammad 'Abd al-Halim, with the pen-name Sharar. Both of tnem did a lo for the education and emancipation of Muslim women.

2. A.M. p. I,

It is amazing to find this cool statement of L. Bevan Jones written down in his "The People of the Mosque" (1932), p. 209 : " Simultaneously he (i.e. Ahmad Khan) worked strenuously for certain social reforms. In particular he challanged two ideas then held by most, that parda was a necessity for Muslim women, whe reas education was not."

3. H.J., 2, 351.

4. H. J., I, 119.

But perhaps two exceptions can be mentioned, viz. his foundation of a homoeopathic hospital and his introduction in the Viceregal Legislative Council of a bill for smallpox vaccination.

Thanks to the activities of Ahmad Khan, on the 25th of Sep. 1867, a hospital called the *Homoeopathic Dispensary and Hospital* was opened in Benares. This propagation of homoeopathic treatment by our reformer is not surprising when one realizes how much attraction naturalistic ideas had for him. In a speech on Homoeopathy, delivered on the 17th Dec. of that year, he declares i.a. : "According to the principles of Homoeopathy, homoeo-medicines are those which produce in a healthy body symptoms similar to those of the disease, and there is no doubt that, when those medicines are given to a disease of a similar kind, then in accordance with Nature, i.e. the natural laws, it will make the disease well immediately ; it is as if Nature, i.e. the wisdom of Providence, has given us the indication that the medicine which in a state of health produces symptoms of a disease is the very drug which in a state of disease is the cure of it. So Homoeopathy is not a man-made cure, but rather one indicated by Nature."[1]

In Sept. 1879, Ahmad Khan introduced in the Viceregal Legislative Council a bill for smallpox vaccination which would make vaccination compulsory in the N.-W. Provinces, Oudh, the Central Provinces, British Burma, Assam, Ajmer and Coorg. On the 18th Oct. he delivered a vigorous speech in support of this bill, and said i.a., "The strongest argument against the proposed law is that there are still many amongst the people of this country who look upon vaccination either as unnecessary or objectionable. But in a matter of this kind the discussion resolves itself into the simple question whether the indifference or opposition of a part of the community should be allowed to deprive the whole com-

1. "Majmu'a," I, 54.

munity of advantages which the truths of science and the conclusions of actual experience have made undeniable.... Concession to personal freedom[1] does not make right the wrong which harms other people in case of a smallpox epidemic, particularly infants who cannot protect their own lives. So by making vaccination compulsory the lives of infants will be guarded against the consequences of the stupidity of their parents, just as adults will be preserved from the pernicious consequences of the ignorance or heedlessness of neighbours."[2]

(c) HIS EDUCATIONAL IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES

A good notion of the importance, which Ahmad Khan attached to education and of the place which it occupied in his thought and actions, can be formed from the following statement : "There are people who hold the opinion that our national cause will be promoted (in the best way) by discussing political affairs. I do not agree with that, but regard the spread of education to be the only means for the promotion of the national cause. In these days our nation should not strive for anything other than the spread of education. When in our country education will be sufficiently propagated then we shall have sufficient means to arise from our backward condition."[3] And an uneducated human mind was to him "like a gray marble block : as long as it is not touched by the hand of a sculptor . . . so long its splendour, its beautiful form, its bewitching colours and its fine designs remain concealed."[4] At the same time he was conscious of the stern

1. Members of the Council objected on the ground that the issue of such compulsory rules would be interference with the personal freedom of the subjects.

2. Cf. "Majmu'a," I, 319-23, and Graham, pp. 210-14.

3. A quotation from the opening speech at the Muhammadan Educational Conference on 27 Dec. 1886 (see Iftikhar 'Alam, "History of the Muh. College," p. 279).

4. T.A. 86-87.

fact that in the complicated structure of the modern technical age only well-instructed experts could be employed, and he warns his fellow-countrymen, e.g. "Trade is no longer the job of ignorant Bedouins."[1] Therefore he urges them to make it their object to store up the best knowledge "to enable themselves to visit distant and different countries . . . and to expand trade and establish trading stations under the name of the Muhammadan and Hindu Company in London, Edinburgh, Dublin, Brussels, St. Petersburg, etc." [2]

Soon after the Mutiny, Ahmad Khan published a Review of Instruction, written in Urdu and English, in which he set forth very radical views."[3] He says in it i.a. : "The government holds the opinion that where there is planning for the instruction of a people, the best vehicle for it is the language of that people, and thus the time which would be spent on teaching the vocabulary and idiom of another language would be saved. By way of a parallel it is pointed out that all the Europeans and Arabs received instruction in their own languages We ought to consider whether the language we want to use for instruction can be applied for that purpose . . . First of all we must know with regard to the language in which we want to impart instruction, whether there are sufficient text-books in it or not : and if not, instruction in that language is out of the question. The second thing we must ask is, whether this language in itself is suitable for text-books to be written in it . . . And, thirdly, whether the result of the study of sciences in

1. See the lecture delivered on the occasion of the 9th anniversary of the Muh. Educ. Conf. in 1894.

2. See H.J, 2, 117.

3. See H.J. 1, 84-86. The exact date of that Review is not mentioned by Hali, as he states only : " in those days." But from the context it follows that it was about 1859.

such a language would be quickness of apprehension, sharpness of intellect, soundness of mind, high intelligence, facility of speech, power of persuasion, and a character which gives evidence of education. The Urdu language cannot satisfy those three conditions. Therefore it is the duty of the government to change completely the system of education . . . And it should start instruction in that language through which the real aim of education can be attained. It is my firm conviction that it should abolish *in toto* the system of imparting instruction in the Indian vernacular, and that it should only continue with English schools." [1]

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1. In later times he does not put the case so strongly, and in 1882 in a Report to the Commission of Education he makes the following distinction: "In the vernacular and English primary and middle schools which do not intend to prepare students for a higher standard of education, it is certainly better for the country that there, for so far as Western knowledge is imparted, instruction should be given in the vernacular. But in English elementary schools, which are erected with this purpose in view that in them the way will be paved for higher education, tuition in European sciences through the medium of the vernacular is calculated to ruin the cause of education." (H. J. I, 246-47).

Probably in the last sentence of this passage the speaker thinks of the foundation of the Panjab University in Lahore, inaugurated on the 18th Nov. 1882. For to the formation of this university which intended "to teach the Oriental languages upon modern principles, and to impart a knowledge of modern sciences through the medium of the vernacular" (G. W. Leitner, "Indigenous Elements of Self-Government in India," p. 71), Ahmad Khan had just offered fierce resistance He published two articles against its proposed establishment. In the first of them, entitled "Eastern Learning and Arts," he argued that when in former days the government seemed to wish to promote Eastern learning, "Indians firmly believed that in fact the government did not want to impart real education, and that it intended to give us as much instruction as was required for the use of the government itself, and that it wished to make us vehicles to carry cargos from one place to another, that it needed for its land administration and offices such figures who could write English without understanding it, like those Manchester figures who are required to spin thread." (H.J., 2, 113-14).

A recent parallel of this odd aversion of people in awakened Eastern countries for every intention on the part of Europeans to preserve somehow Oriental culture and learning is recorded by J. van Baal in the periodical "Indonesie, "Sept. 1948, p. 131, where he states: "A curious instance of this attitude towards all that is and belongs to oneself, procured Bali at the return of the Dutch government (i.e. after the defeat of Japan). One of the

Shortly after, when he was a *Sadr al-Sudur* in Ghazipur, he had the first opportunity to give shape to these ideas. Through subscription of rich Indians he was enabled to start a school in that town[1] in which five languages were taught, viz., English, Urdu, Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit.[2]

first things the Dutch had to promise at that moment was that no effort would be made to start again the so-called Balinizing of education, i.e. the close linking-up of education with the autochthonous culture, a matter which before the war was the pride and glory of an enlightened educational policy. The only thing which was wanting was that the Balinese themselves appeared not to appreciate it, though they are well aware of the significance of their own culture and are certainly very fond of the fame which their culture enjoys today. Education, however, ought to be Wesern education and that's that."

1. This was not actually the first school started by Ahmad Khan; in 1859 he had established a Persian madrasah in Muradabad.

Hali remarks with regard to the foundation of this school in Ghazipur: "If Sir Sayyid had stayed there some years longer, it would not have been surprising if it had reached the rank of a college. But in that year, i.e. in 1864, he was transferred to Aligarh." (H.J. I, 123).

2. Sanskrit also! Moreover it is recorded that the first patron of this school was a Hindu, Raja Har Dev Narayan Singh. In the beginning of his work for the benefit of the nation Ahmad Khan looked also to the interests of the Hindus, and there was no sign of communal aspirations. But this attitude changed when, in 1867, Hindus in Benares started an agitation for the abolition of Persian characters and the Urdu language from all the courts of the government in favour of Hindi and the Devanagari script. The following report of Ahmad Khan of an interview he had with the Commissioner in Benares, Mr. Shakespeare, reflects his altered attitude: "When in those days this question (of language and script) was the subject of much talk in Benares, I discussed with Mr. Shakespeare the instruction of Muslims, and he was surprised at what I told him. At last he said: 'Today is the first time that I hear you speak about the progress of the Muslims only. Previously you appeared to think always of the welfare of the Indian people in general.' I said to him that I was now convinced that not in any work could both communities cooperate. The opposition of those people who regard themselves as educated is not yet fierce, but in the future it will increase." (H. J. I, 140). Besides this, another important factor which must have made our reformer disinclined towards 'cooperation' is that, more and more, he recognized that increasingly the Hindus surpassed their Muslim compatriots in progress, politically and economically, and so everything had to be done for his own community lest it should be overrun by the Hindus. Yet the never intended to rouse antagonistic feelings between the two groups, and till the end of his life he used to declare that friendship between Muslims and Hindus should be a

Another institution in Ghazipur founded by Ahmad Khan, which had the education of the Indian people in view, was the Scientific Society. But now he forsook for a moment his principle that modern sciences could be taught only through the medium of English, for the main activity of this society was to have English standard works[1] translated into Urdu for the diffusion of modern knowledge.[2]

Only for one year did the Scientific Society have its headquarters in Ghazipur. When, in 1864, Ahmad Khan was transferred to Aligarh it moved with him to that place. There the Society got a building of its own (1866), and thus the opportunity was created to have lectures at regular times, delivered by Englishmen, on topics of general interest. From 1866 on, the Society issued a periodical, *The Scientific Society Paper*, soon altered to *The Aligarh Institute Gazette*. Besides the topics of the day one finds in it articles on social, ethical, scientific and political subjects, along with reports of lectures and meetings of the Society. Where the subjects dealt with are of interest to the English-reading public also,

matter of course, for "since centuries we have both been living on the same soil, eating the fruit of the same land . . . breathing the air of the same country . . . Often I have said that India is like a pretty bride. The Hindus and Muslims are her two eyes. Her beauty lies in this that both her eyes are bright and alike. If one is not like the other, the pretty bride becomes squint-eyed." (A M. 55). Once when he heard that, on the occasion of the Baqar 'Id (festival of sacrifices in commemoration of Abraham's offering up his son Ismael) students of the Aligarh College had bought a cow for sacrifice, he interfered immediately and the cow was sent back to its owner. (See H J. 2, 549-50).

1. Amongst the books translated by the Society there are the works of Mill and Senior on Political Economy, Elphinstone's "History of India," Burn's work on Agriculture, and Harris' treatise on Electricity, as well as elementary books on Arithmetic and Algebra. (See "Aligarh Institute Gazette" of 22 Jan. 1875).

2. Afterwards he declared that the aim of the Society had failed : ". . . after the experiment (of this Society) I perceived that it is impossible to instruct my people by means of translated works of modern sciences." (A statement in his lecture delivered in Jullandur on the 4th Febr. 1884 ; see "Majmu'a" I, 231).

the Urdu text is accompanied by an English version. In this way, by acquainting the English with Indian affairs and opinions, it wanted at the same time to advance mutual understanding.

A much greater task still remained to be achieved by Ahmad Khan. While in England he visited Cambridge, and made there a thorough study of the university and its system of education. He then came to the conclusion that something similar would bring the needed succour for his degraded community,[1] and from that moment he never dropped this conviction, and stuck to his object with indomitable pluck and untiring energy. Yet it must have appeared a long way to the final realization of this noble purpose.

Soon after his return to India he set up a committee, called *Committee striving after Educational Progress of the Muslims,* of which he was elected secretary. It imposed on itself the task of finding out why Muslim students in the

1. In other words, Ahmad Khan did not in the first place make the restoration of his people depend on the extension of primary schooling and stamping out of illiteracy, and in one of his speeches he states: "There are people who think that we should educate the people by spreading primary education . . . Indeed it is a matter of rejoicing that in so short a time the nation has begun to care for the education of the people . . but I must confess that in my opinion by such aspirations they neglect what should come first, i.e. the spread of the highest education for Muslims, and that their attention is directed to what should come in the second place instead of what should preponderate." ("Majmu'a," 3, 501). Probably this accentuation of the highest education by Ahmad Khan is closely bound up with his legitimate fear that the production of half-educated people in India would be continued, and with his desire that Indian Society should now receive competent scholars and leaders, able to help the nation forward. See regarding this his criticism of the existing government universities: "What in India passes by the name of the highest education, is in fact not the highest stage of education but education of a low standard." A.M. 63). "The subjects of instruction (in a university-course) are many, but not in any subject is a sufficient knowlege acquired. The result of this is that by it neither an important author nor a great scholar has been produced, whose name would be lasting, or who could have influence on his people. This is a great handicap for moral and social progres." (A statement made by him before the Commission of Education : see H. J. I, 252).

government colleges and schools were so few. To get an answer to this question it announced a prize for a subject which had to deal with this problem. Of the thirty-two answers received, Ahmad Khan made a summary, of which two points deserve to be mentioned here, viz. (*a*) that some of the motives of the Muslims in not sending their children to government schools were unjustifiable, but that most of them had their good reason, and the educational system of the government was inadequate to meet the needs of the Muslims ; (*b*) that even if the government changed its educational system for the Muslims, the matter would not be settled for the only true expedient was that the Muslims themselves should draw their attention to their education.[1] This last point is very important because here the principle of self-help, which turned out later on to be of exceeding significance for the foundation of the Aligarh College, begins to emerge.

After it a second committee was established under the name : *Fund Committee for the Foundation of a Muslim College*, and again Ahmad Khan became the secretary. This Committee did a lot of good work, and was the centre for all that concerned the lofty aim our reformer had set before his eyes.

In July 1872, Ahmad Khan published on behalf of this Committee a poster in which the Muslims were asked where they thought the College should be erected. The issue of the poster was necessitated by the circumstance that some people wanted to give a contribution for the proposed College only on condition that from their money property should be purchased, and therefore a place for it must be fixed in order that one could look out for a piece of ground. The result of this investigation was laid down in a report of Ahmad Khan, in which is stated, i.a. : "The nature of the Institution itself, viz. that the students should have as few

1. See H. J., I, 174-75.

temptations as possible as are likely to mislead them from their proper ends, that their thoughts and notions, instead of wandering astray, should take a turn to calmness and serenity, and that their manners and morals should improve, requires that the College should be opened, not in any of the large towns where temptations to evil are great, nor in any small village, where the necessaries of life are hardly procurable. I am glad to say that our requirements will be most conveniently fufilled by fixing upon Aligarh as the site of the new College. The next point for our consideration is the excellence of its climate[1] . . . People have spoken much about the establishment of the College in Delhi, a city which has nothing more than some ruined walls, and the tombs of some of the most learned and noble personages who lie buried in them."[2]

In Febr. 1873, Sayyid Maḥmūd presented to the Committee a scheme[3] for the management and the system of education of the proposed College which he had prepared after a study of the educational system of schools, colleges and universities in England. A copy of it was sent to the Government of India in order that, if the government accepted the scheme, support might be given from the Grants-in-aid.

1. Another point in favour of Aligarh is related by J. Kennedy in the "Asiat. Quart. Rev." 1898, where he says: "Aligarh is especially fortunate in its native gentry. Mahommedan families of wealth and position have lived there for centuries. And the younger members of these families were liberal and enlightened." On the other hand Delhi, which seems to have been the alternative choice for the site of the College, was, according to Hali, "the centre of conservatism and national and religious prejudice, so that it would certainly have been as difficult to carry out Sir Sayyid's projects in that city as it was to plant Islam in Mecca." (H. J. 2, 491).

2. It is known that after the calamities of the Mutiny Ahmad Khan avoided visiting his birthplace, lest all the sad memories of those days would be awakened in him. (Cf. H. J. 2, 491).

3. This scheme—as H.K. Sherwani mentions in his review on this book (Islamic Culture, Oct. 1949)—is detailed in the "Tahdhib al-Akhlaq," vol. V, pp. 90-102 (1874), described and critically examined by Haji Muhammad Musa Khan Sherwani in "Muslim University ke bhule hue usul."

It was in these days that Ahmad Khan started his great campaign for the College. Wherever in India he had a friend or supporter, he asked him to found there a sub-committee of the *Fund Committee*. He himself made tour after tour throughout India to win people for his plans, and everywhere he delivered brilliant speeches urging the need of high education for the Muslims.

On the 21st Dec. 1873, the decision was taken by the *Fund Committee* to start a school for primary education, subordinate to the proposed College, for, in the meantime, the opposition from the side of the Maulawīs, the champions of the old school, was growing in strength and range, and threatened the aims of the Committee. The members of this Committee held the view that the best way to remove that opposition was the foundation of a school which could serve as a model to show the people that the desired new educational methods did not contradict the principles of Islam. So, on the 24th May 1875, the birthday of Queen Victoria, this school was opened. About that time the Committee succeeded, after some trouble (see note 2 on p. 9), in obtaining a piece of ground for the buildings of the College. Two conditions were connected with the grant of the building-site by the government, viz. (*a*) that before building, a draught of the buildings must be sent to the government for approval; (*b*) that, supposing it should happen that this College closed down, then all the buildings which had been built by the Committee would become the property of the government.

The most strenuous part of the preparations for the College was the collection of subscriptions. "The Indian in general, and particularly the Muslim, was not at all accustomed to the institution of giving contributions for a national cause. As long as there was not pressure or a hint from an official, it was very

hard to collect subscriptions."[1] Nevertheless Aḥmad Khan took recourse to every means he could. To give some examples: "Once Sayyid Maḥmūd bet Qāḍī Riḍa Husain 50 rupees in some connection and it was agreed that the loser should give 50 rupees for the College. It so happened that Sayyid Maḥmūd lost. He came with a note of 100 rupees and said to Qāḍī: 'Give me 50 rupees and take the note.' The latter replied: 'It was merely a joke; moreover betting is not allowed.' Sir Sayyid also was present. When he saw that there was money for the College, he said: 'If the wager is not for personal gain, it is permitted'; and immediately he took out of a box 50 rupees, gave it to Sayyid Maḥmūd, and took the note."[2]

Our reformer could also sometimes exploit cleverly human vanity for the sake of the College. Thus "for drawing the attention of Mukhtār al-Mulk Sālār Jang I of Hyderabad to the College, he got a picture painted with the following scene: Sir Sayyid stands on the seashore, confused and worried, leaning against a tree. At some distance Mukhtār al-Mulk and two friends are standing. On the sea a storm is raging. The mast of a crowded ship is broken, and it is about to sink. Some people have fallen in the sea and are drowning. A boat with some persons in it is approaching the ship to save the drowning. On its flag there is written: 'One lakh of rupees.' Sir Sayyid remains worried and says: 'Not sufficient.' An angel is descending from heaven, then poising in the air seizes with one hand the hand of Sir Sayyid, and pointing with a finger of the other hand at Mukhtār al-Mulk, he says to Sir Sayyid: 'Look at this noble man.' By the ocean in this picture time is meant; by the ship the Muslim community; by the boat which comes to the rescue of the people on the ship, the College; by the one lakh written on the flag, the money collected for the

1. H. J. I, 199.
2. Ibid., 211.

College up to that moment . . . This picture was sent to Mukhtār al-Mulk, and when he saw it, he was much impressed by it, and decided to grant 100 rupees a month from his private estates, and at first 300 and later on 500 rupees a month from the income of his *Nizam*-government ; and when afterwards His Highness succeeded to the throne, he added twice as much to the 500 rupees."[1]

The next important date in the history of the College was the 8th Jan. 1877, when with proper ceremonial the Viceroy Lord Lytton laid the foundation-stone.

The buildings of the College were erected on a grand scale, for Ahmad Khan knew that, whereas a long time is required to make common people aware of the benefit of instruction and education, the splendour of the buildings would instantly have its effect on the average Muslim.[2]

On the 1st Jan. 1878, the classes were started. There were two departments: (*a*) an English department, in which university courses were run, and (*b*) an Oriental department, in which modern sciences were taught in Urdu, and the old culture and learning in Persian and Arabic. In addition, one period was fixed for English as an obligatory second language. The last department however had a short existence. Too few students entered it, as it could not promise them sufficient livelihood for the future.

In the first department the students were prepared for the Intermediate, B A., B.Sc., M.A., M.Sc., D.Sc., and LL.B. examinations of the Allahabad and Calcutta universities, to which the College was affiliated. The imparted subjects were English, Political Economy, Philosophy, History, Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, and, when the Oriental department was closed, Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. The first period of each day's work was

1. H.J. I, 207-08.
2. Ibid., 214.

devoted to lectures on Theology,[1] *and attendance at these lec*tures was enforced by regulations as stringent as those relating to the ordinary class-work of the College. All the Muslim boarders were also required to pray five times a day[2] and, except in the case of a reasonable excuse, to fast in the month of Ramaḍān.

Besides religious instruction, another important respect, in which the Aligarh College differed from all the other institutions for higher education in India, was the attention paid to character-building in those trained within its walls. The principal and professors[3] resided within its precincts and were in constant intercourse with their pupils.[4]

In short, Aligarh was a place where the young Muslim[5] was at home : he wore a special college uniform, consisting of a black Turkish coat, white trousers and a fez ; he could take part in a flourishing Union life with regular debates and other activities, and also ample opportunity was offered to him for sports, like cricket, hockey and so on.

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1. Curiously enough all modern views were scrupulously avoided in the religious instruction of the College. (See Iftikhar Alam, " History of the Mohammedan College," p. 130 : " Some misinformed people think that the religious ideas of the late Sir Sayyid are taught (in the College), and that the boys get instruction in his books and Qur'anic commentary, but this is a false opinion. Not one of the small or big text-books in the College contains any writing by Sir Sayyid.") Yusuf Ali points to this inconsistency in the College and writes: " Religious instructors were appointed to teach on the old lines which did not really appeal to the students, but which appealed to their parents and to the community generally . . . To this day (i.e. 1941) the nature of religious instruction remains undefined" ("Modern India and the West," pp. 401-02).

2. For absence from the prayers a student was fined !

3. Well-known scholars like T. W. Arnold, Jos. Horovitz, A.S. Tritton were once lecturers in Aligarh.

4. It should be noticed that herewith an old Eastern tradition was observed, namely, that of the parental relation between the guru, or the shaikh and his disciple.

5. Although it was a Muslim College, yet Hindus and Christians could also, and did also, enter, and there was no interference with their religious practice.

The Aligarh College did not fail to attain visible results quite soon. The following figures for 1893 are very instructive and significant : while in that year according to the census in Bengal, for instance, the number of Muslim graduates should have been 45·9%, it was in fact only 3·4% ; in Madras 0·9% instead of 6·8% ; in the N. W. Provinces and Oudh, the direct sphere of influence of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, however, the percentage was 17·6% instead of 11·2% ! Still Ahmad Khan was not satisfied with the success achieved. The dream which haunted him till the end of his life was that " in the garden which we have planted, now such a mighty tree will arise that its branches will overshadow the country, and that by it fresh power will be created, and the College will grow into a university, where students from every corner of this country will make free researches with an open mind and a well-developed character."[1] It was not allotted to him to see his vision of a Muslim university realized. Not until 1920 did the Government of India agree to promote the College to the rank of a university.

For our indefatigable reformer the foundation of the College was not yet a sign that now he had done his duty and could rest on his oars. He recognized that, even if the College did answer the purpose, the problem of national education could not be solved by it, and one college could not secure the education of 60,000,000 Muslims. So he planned for a kind of national education-institute, where all the available powers could be centralized for furthering instruction among the Muslims.[2]

1. "Aligarh Institute Gazette" of 12 Jan. 1877.

2. Cf. with these sentences of Ahmad Khan's opening address at the Conference on the 27th Dec. 1886, in the Aligarh College : "Till now this is our situation that, although we are said to be one Muslim community, yet the people living at one place are unacquainted with (the conditions) of people living at another, so that we, so to speak, are strangers to each other. We do not know what views people in the Panjab hold about their popular education and the promotion of the national cause, and what they

held each time in a different town, and there educational experts from all over India assembled to put and discuss various educational questions[1] and proposals; (2) that of committees which were set up to serve the purposes of the Conference, as for example reporting on the progress or decline of Muslim schools. The results of the discussions in the annual meetings were expressed in resolutions. And to have an idea of the problems treated, we will quote here some of the accepted resolutions : (a) to ask the help of Muslim Anjumans (local societies) for scholarships for poor students ; (b) to make an appeal to the government that in the government schools the Muslims should get an opportunity of receiving religious instruction ; (c) to urge the Allahabad University to exclude from the curriculum Cox's history which contained chapters offensive to the Muslims ; (d) the obligation for every Muslim to give 1% of his income for the diffusion of Western knowledge amongst the Muslims of his district, etc.

The number of those fine projects and good intentions was inversely proportionate to that of the factual results; only a fraction of the aims they strove after were realized. Yet the impact and pushing power of the Conference should not be overlooked, for it was a rallying-point where many Muslims

1. Among the subjects discussed in the annual sessions one meets the question of education of Muslim girls. In this connection Ahmad Khan expressed views similar to those on the pardah [see infra, sec. (e), para 2]. In the third session of the Moh. Educ. Conf. (1888) he declared : "People may be astonished that, though I have in many affairs progressive ideas, I hold about the education of girls views resembling those of our elders.... In India (and here follows his basic argument) the time is not yet ripe to found schools for the education of girls and to imitate the girls schools of Europe." (See "Majmu'a," I, 266-69.) Before the Commission on Education he stated i.a. in regard to this topic : "The fact is that no satisfactory education can be provided for Muslim girls as long as most of the Muslim boys do not receive proper education .... When the present generation of Muslim men becomes well educated, inevitably it will have a strong though unperceived influence on the enlightenment of Muslim women, for enlightened fathers, brothers and husbands will naturally be desirous of educating their female relations." (H. J. I, 252-53).

from near and remote places met each other, made acquaintances and studied national affairs. Consequently its meetings have done much for the union and revival of a Muslim community, so scattered and cast adrift.

Chapter 4

AHMAD KHAN AND ISLAM

In the field of religion too Ahmad Khan is an autodidact. Reared in the faith of his ancestors, he gradually and bravely disentangled himself from the bonds of *taqlid*, and ultimately succeeded in attaining to an interpretation of Islam which, according to his firm conviction, could withstand the attacks on religion from the side of modern scholarship. A good illustration of the great divergency in religious outlook of the young and the old Ahmad Khan is found in one of his early writings where he defends the orthodox Muslim view that the sun revolves around the earth,[1] while one of his last articles has as its theme the contention that the revolution of the sun around the earth is not proved by the Qur'ān.[2]

The development of Ahmad Khan's religious thought can be established after his steadily increasing contact with the West. And there is nothing artificial in making two of the most dominant factors in his relation to Western culture decisive turning-points in his theological views, viz. the Mutiny and his journey to England. So the following three periods can be distinguished : (1) First Stage of his Religious Thought (1842-57) ; (2) Time of Transition (1857-69); (3) period of Independent Religious Thought (1870-98).

1. This writing called "Qaul matin dar ibtal i harakat i zamin" (A Vigorous Refutation of the Motion of the Earth) (between 1846 and 1848).

2. A. M. 41-43.

(I) FIRST STAGE OF HIS RELIGIOUS THOUGHT (1842-57)

In this period Ahmad Khan sticks anxiously to orthodoxy, i.e. in particular to the *via media* between the extravagances of popular belief and the ruthless reformations of the Wahhābīs. The always recurring touchstone is the *Sunna* (example) of the Prophet and his Companions.

Ahmad Khan starts his theological career with the publication of a biographical sketch of Muḥammad, called *Jila al-Qulub bi Zikr al-Mahbub* (Delight of the Hearts in Remembering the Beloved) (1842). In a review the author himself gives of this treatise, 36 years later on, he tells about the direct cause for writing it, and says : " In those days I read many *Maulud*-writings,[1] and even for the opinion I held at that time they contained shocking passages, and those writings are more like elegies and collections of recitations which are used for the Muḥarram-celebrations,[2] than biographies of the Prophet. So I decided to compose a short sketch, relating the (actual) events in the life of the Prophet without apocryphal stories."[3] In other words, here an attempt is made to restrict rank popular belief and phantasy ; and the author mentions only miracles based on sound traditions, like this story : ". . . in the night in which the Prophet was born, celestial lights were seen, and the palace of Kisra, who was a famous king of the unbelievers and whose dynasty reigned for thousands of years, shook and fourteen turrets fell down . . . . And the fire of the temple of the Persians which had burnt for centuries and was venerated by the Fire-worshippers, was extinguished."[4]

His second defence of the Sunnī-camp was directed against

1. Maulud : celebration of the birthday of Muhammad.
2. 10th Muharram is the remembrance-day of the battle of Kerbela' in which the sons of 'Ali were killed.
3. Tas. A. I, 19.
4. Ibid., I, 4.

the Shī'a. Under the title *Tuhfa Hasan* (1844) he published an Urdu translation of the 10th and 12th chapter of the work of Sunnī apology *Tuhfat ithna 'ashariyya* (A treatise on the 12 Imāms).[1] It deals with the various libels levelled by the Shī'a against the first caliph Abu Bakr, to which every occasion an answer (*jawab*), i.e. a refutation, is added. In a review of this tract, written in 1878, his judgment on this question is more sober and more in conformity with historical truth, and there he states simply : "To discourse on libels levelled against Companions of the Prophet is one of the most nonsensical, silly and imaginary things in the world . . . The making of mistakes, particularly in the manner of administration they used, is unavoidable . . . The Companions of the Prophet were not infallible . . . If there are stories known (about them) which are open to criticism, then neither 'Alī nor the three caliphs can be excused from that criticism."[2]

In the third treatise, entitled *Kalimat al-Haqq* (1849) Ahmad Khan expresses his "view upon the spiritual guidance of a *pir* (head of a religious order) and the discipleship of a *pir*, where the proper limits are trespassed."[3] The condition at the end is typical : the author does not combat here devotional life as such, but excesses of it, and he states i.a. : "One should know that it is not wrong, but rather it is approved by the *Sunna*, to attach oneself as a disciple to some virtuous, abstinent, literate and learned person, but there are no grounds (in the Sunna) for becoming a disciple in a certain order . . . At this very moment it so happened that people trust themselves to a *pir*, take a herb as a talisman and think that at the hour of death their *pir* will be a patron . . . These are erroneous

1. Later on Ahmad Khan's attitude toward the Shi'a became more tolerant and he arranged it in the Aligarh College that religious instruction was imparted along the lines of the Sunni as well as of the Shi'i tenents.

2. Tas. A. I, 75.

3. Ibid., I 78.

thoughts ; only one's own deeds are of avail in the grave."[1]

The increasingly firmer hold which Wahhābism got in those days on the minds of Muslims was the occasion for the issue of a fourth brochure, entitled *Rah i Sunna dar radd i Bid'a* (The *Sunna* and the Rejection of Innovations) (1850). Here he argues that what Wahhābīs often account for as *bid'at* (innovation which has slipped into religious practice) is not actually such, but is mostly traceable to the *Sunna* of the Prophet and his Companions.

The fifth tract is called *Namiqa dar bayan i maslat i tasawwur i shaikh* (Explanation of the *tasawwur i shaikh*-doctrine) (1852). With regard to this tenet of *tasawwur*[2] the author rejects "spiritualistic" speculations about it, i.e., the idea that in a state of *muraqaba* ("observation" : the first of a series of mystical states), caused by *tasawwur*-practice, one can evoke and arrest the appearance of the Shaikh or Pīr ; and he desires to restrict the purport of the *tasawwur*-ritual to the bringing about of a spiritual relationship between the Shaikh and his disciple, which should produce a salutary effect upon the impure mind and soul of the latter. Here again Ahmad Khan obviously steers a middle course ; he does not deny possible elevating influences of Sufism, but attacks magical practices in it.

The last writing of this first period is an Urdu version of some passages from the *Kimiya al-Sa'ada* of al-Ghazali (1853).

On the whole it is not too much to say that the pamphlets of this period "do not evidence any marked originality of thought, capacity for critical research, or pronounced departure

1. Tas. A. I, 86-87.

2. Tasawwur ("imagining") is an essential part of the training of Naqshbandi novices. "The pupil is directed to think of the Pir's form, to retain his breath, and to suppose his heart to express the word 'Allah' " [R. F. Burton, "Sindh" (1851), p. 215].

from received opinions. They could have been written by a third-rate Moulvi of those days."[1]

(2) TIME OF TRANSITION (1857-69)

In the Bible-commentary (*Tabyin al-Kalam*) (1862) of Ahmad Khan—the only important religious work of this period—the first efforts to get rid of ancestral notions are visible. Here, for instance, one finds already the conception of the angels and the devil stated,[2] because of which in later times, i.e., after the parts of his Qur'ān-*tafsir*, he was accused by the Maulawīs of denying the factual existence of the angels and the devil.

Then he tries to belittle miraculous features in the story of the Flood,[3] when informed of the objections of geologists to its historicity; and he contends that according to the data of the Holy texts the Deluge was partial and not universal. He bases this assertion on a grammatical subtlety. Referring to Gen. 47 : 19, 23; Ex. 10 : 5; Num. 22 : 11; Deut. 4 : 1; 5 : 16, he argues that " hā āreṣ " can mean a particular part of the earth, instead of the whole of it, and that in the record of the Flood there is an instance of this.

Still he keeps in the same work several traditional views which he denounced afterwards in his *Tasfir*. For instance, he believes at this time that " the accepted offering of Abel was taken up by some heavenly fire that appeared on the earth for the purpose."[4] In his *Tafsir*, however, his argument is this :

1. Shah Din, "Syed Ahmad Khan as a Religious Reformer" ("Hindustan Review," March 1904).

2. Cf. T. K. 2, 146-47: "God has, in His perfect wisdom, so constituted man that in his nature there exist two principles: one being the principle of good, and the other the principle of evil, and they are defined as angelic powers and animal instincts. It is the latter that incite man to sin, and are hence known in the Shar'a as Satan, but it does not mean that Satan is really a creature, independent of man's existence."

3. See T. K. 2, 300-12.

4. Ibid., 2, 193.

" From these texts (Gen. 15 : 17 ; Judges 6 : 21 ; I Kings 18 : 38) the Jews and the Christians conclude that, when all the sacrifices, for which fire descended from heaven, were accepted, it is very likely that the sacrifice of Abel was accepted, having been burned by the fire descending from heaven. Our commentators who copied the Jewish scholars precisely went even a step beyond them : while the Jews write about this question as something which seems to be probable, our scholars write about it in their commentaries as something which is certain . . . In *al-Tafsir al-Kabir* it is stated: ' Fire descended from heaven, and the sacrifice of Abel was accepted, and not that of Cain ' . . . Islam, however, should not be defiled and polluted by such stupid ideas "[1] In the *Tabyin* the Virgin Birth of Christ is not yet a doubtful doctrine[2]; in the *Tafsir* (2, 22-38) the Virgin Birth is denied and rejected as a supernatural event and an article of belief, conceived several generations after Christ's life on earth ; while it is clear that the disciples of Jesus " knew and accepted that he was proceeded from the seed of Joseph."[3]

(3) PERIOD OF INDEPENDENT RELIGIOUS THOUGHT (1870-98)

From 1870 onwards Ahmad Khan had no longer any scruples about the teachings of his forefathers. By his own investigations and studies, made in the British Museum and the Library of the India Office, he was enabled to fix his principles of Islam, i.e., to define how Islam should be apprehended by Muslim intelligentsia.

It will be advantageous to construct a kind of systematized theology out of his religious ideas by arranging them, unorderly and scattered as they are in his works of this period, under the

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1. "Tafsir," 2, 195-96.
2. See T.K. 3, 40.
3. " Tafsir," 2, 30.

of the promises (*wu'ud*) of God, e.g. in S. 5 : 12, "God has promised to those who believe and do good deeds that they shall have forgiveness and mighty reward," and in S. 7 : 42, "And the dwellers of the garden shall call out to the inmates of the fire: Surely, we have found what our Lord promised us, to be true." On the ground of such texts he considers himself entitled to finally conclude: "And just as a delay in God's promises is inconceivable, so a change in the laws of Nature, which are promises (of God) carried out into reality, is impossible."[1]

Another important evidence of the truth, i.e. the 'nature-mindedness' of the religion of Islam, is, according to our author, implied in the fact that the ethical prescripts of Islam are well adapted to human nature, and do not require things man cannot perform.[2]

In short, Ahmad Khan's goal is to interpret Islam as a natural religion, and so the always concomitant question in his reforms of Muslim faith is: Can this or that be brought into line with Nature and its laws ?

(*b*) God

Ahmad Khan's description of God is: "God is One and Eternal, Existing (*maujud*) and so Self-existent (*wajib al-wujud*) . . . He reveals Himself in His attributes, i.e. His attributes are identical (*'ain*) with His nature. Nothing or nobody is comparable with Him. Nobody can be associated with Him, or rival Him. He has neither a father nor a son. He is imperceivable, and our reason cannot grasp Him. He goes beyond our understanding, but in our belief and hidden thoughts He is always present . . . Reason can confess about

1. See "Usul," 37-42.
2. See supra, beginning chap. 7.

the Beloved (*ma'shuq*) that He exists . . . but that same reason also declares : I do not know anything more about Him . . . I cannot make any concept of Him, nor any image of Him . . . And if there is no image nor likeness of Him, then He does not exist bodily, and if He does not exist bodily, then He is not bound to matter, and if He is not bound to matter, then He is not bound to place . . . Islamic faith requires from us only belief in the existence of the Self-existent, and not that we should know the *modus* (*kaifiyat*) of His attributes, albeit it is as essential that attributes should be ascribed to Him, as (the belief) that He exists, but to know the *modus* of those attributes goes beyond human comprehension[1] . . . Amongst all the attributes which we ascribe to His nature, there are only two, whose issues are so manifest that—although their real *modus* remains concealed for us—yet everyone observes them and nobody can deny them, viz. (1) the attribute of being the First Cause,[2] (2) the attribute of being the Creator."[3]

This abstract and bloodless conception of God, culminating in the doctrine of the First Cause, was open to two dangerous attacks of the opponents : (*a*) In this way, is God not made an inactive Being who has withdrawn Himself from the world ? and (*b*) Is the teaching of the First Cause not a doctrine of the Materialists ?

In reply to the first objection Ahmad Khan states : "Very pious but less thoughtful divines have the idea that if the world functioned according to laws of Nature and nothing could supersede them, then, creation once having been created,

1 Because—as he explains elsewhere ("Usul," 34)—"the notions we have formed about those attributes are derived from our own imagination and deduced from the creation around us, and they cannot be regarded as identical with God's nature."

2. I.e. as he states in a preceding issue of the "Tahzib al-Akhlaq," of the endless chain of causes and effects, produced by the laws of Nature.

3. T.A. of 5th July, 1894.

nothing would be left for God to do, even though He Himself had created those laws. So what does a god mean to us who has become dethroned and inactive? . . . Those people always put forward notions and analogies derived from daily life in connection with the nature of God. They see that a watch-maker, as soon as the watch is functioning, has nothing more to do with it . . . On this analogy they declare that obviously if God Himself constructs laws of Nature according to which the world will run, then no work is left to Him, and what does He mean to us?" In reply to this misconception Ahmad Khan points out that as everything is caused, its existence ultimately depends on the First Cause, and if it were to lose its connection with the First Cause, it would no longer exist: the chain of causes and effects would be broken. "So if God were inactive, the whole world would perish and it would not exist even one second longer."[1]

Against the accusation that he would teach tenets of the Materialists, Ahmad Khan answers:

"According to the scientists it has been proved that in the beginning there was matter only . . . Now this is the problem: Was this matter hydrogen (and nothing more), or was it still the effect of a cause, i.e. created by the Creator. The Materialists say: It was hydrogen (and nothing more). But I and probably all the Muslims believe that that matter also was created, and that God who is the First Cause, created it. Our argument for it is this that that matter is found in various forms, either in the air, or in water, or in a flower, or in earth . . . What or who caused hydrogen to appear in such different forms? Hydrogen itself cannot be the cause of its various appearances; nay, they are effected by something else. These various forms in which hydrogen occurs clearly show that its existence is the

1. T.A. of 5th July, 1894.

effect of a cause. We accept, therefore, that the First Cause which we call God created it.

"Scientists say that those various appearances are not caused by anything else, but that it is due to the peculiarity of this matter itself that those different forms occur. If these different forms of hydrogen are the products of chemical compounds, then it does not yet prove that these forms are caused by a peculiar quality of that matter . . . No explanation can be given for this: how those atoms, which resemble each other and belong to the same group, become more united to each other, and how it can happen that by a special combination they take here the shape of a mountain, and there that of a river or an ocean . . . This shows that there must exist a Great and Wise One who has the power to combine those atoms in such many ways."[1] The idiom of the Holy Book should not be taken for a kind of heavenly language. Its phraseology is that of an Arab at the time of revelation, who had a great command of language. (Cf. A.M. 44).

(c) Word of God

The Qur'ān is for Ahmad Khan unconditionally the Word of God which "entered into the heart of the Prophet, or was revealed to him *verbatim* . . . I (Ahmad Khan) do not believe that only the subject-matter was revealed to him and that the words, by which the Prophet would have explained the subject-matter in his own language, i.e. Arabic, would have come from the Prophet[2] . . . This contradicts human experience, because it is known that one cannot have

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1. T.A. of 5th June, 1894.

2. In this respect Ahmad Khan is misunderstood by Ahmad Amin who asserts that Ahmad Khan would have taught that "revelation was by ideas, not by words," ("Faid al-Khair" 5, 311) and by W.C. Smith who writes that "he did not believe in 'verbal inspiration'" ["Modern Islam in India" (1946, p. 22)].

conceptions in one's mind not expressed in words . . . Conceptions devoid of words belong to mental absurdities."[1]

In all the new theories Ahmad Khan advanced on account of the Qur'ān and its contents, it is as if he has continually in his mind the conceited, smiling European scholar looking down with great disdain upon 'those bigoted Muslims with their naive notions, and that queer irrational Holy Book of theirs.' So when, e.g., Ahmad Khan opposes the generally accepted view of the commentators that the *ayat* in S. 2 : 100 ("For whatsoever *ayat* We cancel or cause to forget We bring a better or the like") would refer to verses in the Qur'ān, and says that in this way the Qur'ān is made "a note-book of a poet,"[2] then one may take it for granted that his reinterpretation of this text[3] is indirectly meant as a refutation of what European Orientalists deduce from S. 2 : 100, viz. that apparently Muhammad was in need of a divine sanction for his own inconsistencies. When Ahmad Khan combats the traditional opinion that the uniqueness (*mu'jiza*) of the Qur'ān is due to its miraculous rhetoric

1. "Usual," 32-33.
2. "Tafsir," I, 162.
3. Ahmad Khan declares that by the abrogated "ayat" regulations of the Mosaic law are meant. Elsewhere, in support of this theory, two passages from the Qur'an are noted and commented : (1) S. 13 : 38f ("And We have sent apostles before you ; We gave them wives and children. And no apostle could bring an "ayah" without God's permission. For every age there is a book. God blots out or confirms what He will ; for He possesses the Prototype of the Book") "From this verse it follows clearly that the subject dealt with is the "shari'a" of previous prophets." (2) S. 16 : 103 ("And when We change one 'ayah" for another—God knows best what He reveals—they say : You are merely a forger. . ."). "The question in connection with this verse is : Who are saying that ? The commentators write : The unbelievers of Mecca. But this cannot be right. And that because the unbelievers of Mecca know neither with regard to the first "ayah" which is changed, nor with regard to the second which causes the change that they are revealed by God. No, it is only the Jews and Christians who think that the regulations in the Qur'an which contradicted those of the previous Old and New Testaments, were forged by the Prophet.' (A.M. 24f).

the West' . . . . And he does not say how God brings the sun from the East, whether by its own turning or by the turning of the earth. Therefore, it is absolutely wrong to say that this verse is a decisive proof of the revolution of the sun . . One should understand that neither the Qur'ān nor the Prophet discussed or opposed the ideas which were printed in the hearts of the people, or the customs which were current in pre-Islamic times, granted that they were not contrary to the purpose for which the Prophet was sent. And so they left these things as they were . . . It was very sensible not to discuss questions of this sort, because if these questions were discussed, the people would be troubled with a new problem, and the original intention of the guidance would be lost."[1]

But there is more to it than that : it is not merely that in the Qur'ān no instances of an unscientific *Weltanschauung* can be pointed out, nay the Qur'ān is far ahead of its time. So, e g., it hints already at the existence of spermatozoons ! When namely in the Qur'ān the second stage of the development of an embryo is called *'alaq* (bloodclot), Ahmad Khan takes this *'alaq* in the sense of 'leeches.'[2] And these leeches would be "the many minute worms in the sperma of a man which in Greek are called 'spermatozoons.' "[3]

The most interesting aspect of Ahmad Khan's defence of the Qur'ān before the rationalistic outlook of Europe in the nineteenth century is his courageous endeavour to de-supernaturalize the contents of the Holy Book in order to prove that nothing in it contradicts the laws of Nature.

1. A.M. 41-42.

2. Cf. Lane : "alaq"—anything hung or suspended . . . Also leeches, certain worms . . . or clotted blood, because of its clinging together."

3. "Khalq al-insan" (Creation of man) (1892), p. 9.

Fourteen years later Muhammad 'Abduh made a similar luminous discovery by assuming that in S. 2 : 276 there is allusion to "invisible animate bodies which today are made known by means of a miscroscope and which are called microbes." ("al-Manar," 1906, p. 335).

To this end he had at least three resorts at his disposal, viz. (*a*) that of lexicographic jugglings; (*b*) that of the psychologizing of recorded wonders; (*c*) that of the metaphorizing of supernatural notions.

An instance of a lexicographic quirk can be found in the exegesis of the story of Moses' miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, as it is related in S. 2 : 47, 26 : 63 *et seq.* and 20 : 79. As regards the words of S. 26 : 63 (*fa-whaina ila Musa ani'drib bi-'asaka 'l-bahra fa-nfalaqa*),[1] Ahmad Khan remarks that this sentence has always been wrongly interpreted by the commentators who "bring the purposes of the Qur'ān *coute que coute* in conformity with the stories of the Jews; therefore, they take here and on the other places *daraba* in the meaning of 'striking,' and consider it as a supernatural event. But here *daraba* does not mean 'striking,' but 'going' or 'running,' as in the Arabic expression *da raba fi'l-ard* : he journeyed in the land . . . So the obvious sense of this verse is that God said to Moses: 'Go through the sea, leaning on your staff; the sea is split,' i.e. there is a ford."[2]

Another proof of this kind of twisting the texts is Ahmad Khan's explanation of the Jonah story (S. 37 : 140-8), about which he contends: "No plain text in the Qur'ān states regarding Jonah that really the fish swallowed him; in the Qur'ān not the verb *ibtala'a* (to swallow) is used, but *iltaqama* which merely means 'to take with the mouth.' "[3]

The method of psychologizing is applied to the verses 67 and 68 of the second Sūra which Ahmad Khan translates as follows: "(Remember that) when you killed a man, then you began to accuse each other for having done this, and God will reveal what you are hiding. For We said: 'Strike the

1. "And We revealed to Moses: 'Strike the sea with your staff.' Then it was cleft asunder."

2. See "Tafsir," I, 84-88.

3. "Usul," 57.

killed man with a part' (i.e. the members of the people to be tested). So God will revive (i.e. point out) the dead (i.e. the unknown murderer), and He shows you His signs that you may understand."[1] Herewith this elucidation is given : "God revealed in the heart of Moses that all the people who were present and amongst whom was also the murderer should touch the body of the person killed. Then the people who had not killed him would not, on account of their innocence, show fear, while the murderer would show fear being conscious of guilt."[2]

The third form of demythologizing is particularly used for presenting the right idea one ought to have about eschatology and the life hereafter. So our author declares : "A well-educated man knows that by the terms, in which the life hereafter, i.e. hell and heaven, are described, not identical qualifications are meant, but that their description is an intelligible metaphorical expression of the greatest intensity of pleasure and sorrow."[3] Also the signs of the Last Day possess only a symbolic meaning. Thus the blast on the trumpet, mentioned in S. 6 : 73, is a metaphorical locution for this that "at a certain moment on the Day of Resurrection, as God has fixed in the laws of Nature, all shall rise up and be assembled, in the same way as by a blast on the trumpet in an army all are assembled and begin to spoil for the fight."[4]

At last the ingenious exegetic treatment must be mentioned which the *Jinn* (kind of desert-demons) have to endure, and which cannot be classified under one of the above three categories.

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1. Ahmad Khan cuts off any connection of these verses 67-68 with the preceding verses, and so he lets the pronominal suffix "ha" of "ba'diha" refer to the people to be tested, instead of to the sacrificed cow, mentioned in verse 66.
2. "Tafsir," I, 120.
3. Ibid., I, 40.
4. Ibid., 3, 55.

In a special treatise on this topic, entitled *Tafsir al-Jinn wa'l-Jann 'ala ma fi 'l-Qur'an* (1892), the author begins to explain the belief in *Jinn* of the pagan Arabs, who thought of them as fiery beings, able to assume all different shapes and to move everywhere. Then he goes on : "We admit that in five places of the Qur'ān we find the term *Jinn* in the sense the Arabs of pre-Islamic times ascribed to it (i.e. in S. 6 : 100 ; 34 : 40 ; 72 : 5, 6 ; 41 : 29 ; 37 : 158), but only as a statement of *their* belief ; and so it does not prove that the Qur'ān supposes the existence of such beings . . . In all the other places where we meet the term *Jinn* in the Qur'ān, savages who live far from the civilized world in blind corners in forests, mountains and deserts, are understood by it . . . .[1] There is also no doubt that, although amongst the Arabs of pre-Islamic times those fanciful notions about *Jinn* were common and prevalent, yet people knew the term also in the sense of 'savages.' Arabic lexicons were composed long after that time, and as thoughts and expressions change in different ages, many old words lost the meanings they had originally in Arabia. . . Therefore, it became forgotten that *Jinn* in the Qur'ān could mean 'savages.' But we shall cite verses from pre-Islamic times, where without doubt there is mention of *Jinn* in the sense of 'savages.' But before doing so, we shall quote a verse from the Torah, in which it is stated that in olden times people were divided in two groups : Gen. 25 : 27, 'and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field,[2] and Jacob was an orderly man, dwelling in tents.' "

After this Ahmad Khan introduces his references from the

1. The word "jinn" has at least three meanings in the Qur'an, one of which is somethings akin to "clever foreigners." See prefatory note to Surah 72, Pickthall, "The Meaning of the Glorious Koran" (New American Library of World Literature, New York, 1953), p. 416.

2. Cf. J. Skinner in the "Intern. Crit. Commentary" at this place: "Though this conception of Esau's occupation is not consistently maintained (see 33 : 9), it has some ethnographic significance."

pre-Islamic times. The first of them is : "In the *al-Sihah*[1] of al-Jauharī it is said that *anas* or *ins* is a term used for settled tribes who live in towns and villages, and who are considered to be civilized . . . and in support of it al-Akhfash[2] cites these verses : "They come to my fire ; I asked : 'Who are ye ?' They replied : 'We are *Jinn*' ; and I said : 'We envy civilized people (*ins*) their food.' " In these verses the term *Jinn* has the opposite meaning of *ins*, and if *ins* means 'civilized people,' then it is exactly in accordance with the context to fix as its opposite the meaning of 'savages.' "

After several more instances of this sort which are intended to prove the thesis of our author, Ahmad Khan applies this 'unearthed' sense of *Jinn* to various texts of the. Qur'ān, e.g. to S. 51 : 56, "I have not created *Jinn* and man but that they should worship Me" ; and he annotates it in this way : ". . . obviously it means that we all, whether we are living in cities or in forests and mountains, are created to worship God."

(*d*) Messengers of God

The significance Ahmad Khan attributes to prophethood, he sets forth in an article of the *Tahzib al-Akhlaq*, entitled *Conscience*.[3] Here he combats the opinion that our conscience should be a sufficient guide for our moral and religious life. For, how can a man rely on it, when the consciences of a Christian, a Muslim and a Hindu react in such a different way ? Man needs another more reliable guide, viz. a prophet, to unveil the various abilities the Creator has entrusted to mankind. "Therefore, lest man's abilities remain idle, it is necessary that now and then in accord with place and time such

1. Dictionary of this great Arabic philologist.
2. A grammarian whose works are lost, but which is often quoted by other lexicographers.
3. T.A. 124 et seq.

a guide should appear who possesses the innate capacity to explain the true ethical virtues laid down in man's nature."

Ahmad Khan's heretical views regarding the doctrine of prophethood become most prominent in his theories on the process of revelation. Then he says : "Revelation is that which has been given to the Prophet by God, but former interpreters did not explain this *has been given* in the right way ; they thought that God and the Prophet were like a king and a minister. These explanations of our 'Ulama in former days are an object of mockery for people of today, and on account of such explanations they consider the Qur'ān and Islam as nonsense . . . One ought, however, to understand that prophethood is a natural phenomenon which is present in the prophets like other innate faculties . . . Between God and a prophet there does not exist an ambassador who brings messages other than the prophetic talent, which is called *Akbar Namus,* and in the language of the *Shari'a* 'Gabriel.' The heart of the prophet is the mirror in which the splendour of the divine glory is reflected, it is the instrument which echoes the words of God, it is the ear which hears the letterless and soundless words of God."[1]

On the other hand, Ahmad Khan gives evidence of being a good orthodox Muslim when he sees that the doctrine of the impeccability (*'isma*) of the prophets is endangered by the criticism of European scholars and missionaries with regard to weak traits in Muhammad's character. His last, an unfinished, article, *The Wives of the Prophet*, deals with the precarious case of the honesty of the Prophet in the affair of Zainab.[2] His reconstruction of the causes of the divorce of Zainab from Zaid, the adopted son of Muhammad, and her marriage with the Prophet afterwards is as follows : "Zainab, offspring of an aristocratic family, did not like to marry a man who was actually a slave, though the Prophet had released him and adopted him as a son. But when the Prophet insisted on this marriage . . .

1. "Tafsir," I, 26-29.

2. See A.M. 162-65.

Zainab consented to marry Zaid. After the wedding Zainab and Zaid did not hit it off with each other. She looked down with disdain upon her husband . . . The result of it was that Zaid wanted to divorce her, and when he told the Prophet, the latter refused to divorce him ; at that time this verse was revealed (S. 33 : 37) : '(Remember) when you (i.e. Muhammad) said to him (i e. Zaid) unto whom God had shewn His favour, and to whom you also had shewn favour : 'Keep your wife to yourself and fear God' ; and you did hide in your mind what God would bring to light, and you did fear man ; but more right had it been to fear God' . . . . Some (Muslim interpreters) say that by accident the Prophet had seen Zainab bareheaded and taking a bath, and that he had become madly in love with her, and that 'you did hide in your mind . . .' refers to that state of love . . . (But) Zainab was the cousin of the Prophet ; he knew her from his childhood. So it is absurd to think that suddenly he had fallen in love with her . . . The Prophet, however, feared man because in Arabia it was opprobrious to marry the wife of an adopted son." The real ground for the Prophet marrying Zainab was, according to our author, that Muhammad felt himself responsible for her future, "as he had once arranged the marriage of Zainab with Zaid."

Another well-known ground favoured by opponents of Islam for detracting from the honour of Muhammad is the dubious behaviour of the Prophet in the battle of Badr (see S. 8). Here the apology for Muhammad by Ahmad Khan is[1] : "All the Muslim historians who are accustomed to include in their works unreliable stories and rumours, whereby elements of truth and falsehood are uncritically mixed up... state that the Prophet and his Companions, when they saw that in the caravan of Abū Sufian people were small in number and the booty would be rich, resolved to plunder it . . . Through this stupidity and error of the Muslim historians the opportunity presents itself to the adversaries of Islam

1. See "Tafsir," 4, 3-4.

to allege that the Prophet and his Companions wanted to ravage the caravan . . . In fact this allegation is totally wrong and without basis." And the two arguments the author produces against this imputation are : (*a*) Why should Muhammad have needed to stir hesitating people to fight "as if they were driven to death" (S. 8 : 6), if it was only a question of an attack on a weak caravan ? ; (*b*) It is God Himself who commanded that the Quraishites of Mecca should be attacked (vs. 7b "but God was intending to verify the truth in His words and to overthrow completely the unbelievers").[1]

A point in Ahmad Khan's doctrine of prophethood which was important in preparing the path for modernizations, i.e. the abolition of Islamic institutions which were legalized by the *ijma'* (*consensus*) and authorized by invented traditions, is this principle : "We are obliged (*majbur*) to follow the Sunna of the Prophet in religious matters, and we are permitted (*mujaz*)[2] to do it in worldly affairs."[3] This principle is based on the following theory : "This must be kept in mind that only so many words of the men to whom revelations are made as relate to religious matters do we Muslims consider as revelations . . . but if those people were to utter any such words as relate to worldly affairs only, we would not believe them as revelations" And our reformer founds this theory on the next tradition, derived from the *Mishkat* : "When once the Prophet went (from Mecca) to Medina, he saw there people grafting date-trees. Then he asked (them) : 'What are you doing ?' They answered : 'This is a custom of ours.' Then the Prophet said : 'Perhaps it would be better to stop it.' And so they did. The consequence, however, was a scanty

1. The addressed persons in vs. 7a ("you were wishing that the one without armed protection might be yours") were, according to Ahmad Khan, some of the Companions, and not the Prophet himself !

2. The third legal category of the "Shari'a," meant for actions the performance of which the "Shari'a" leaves quite open and for which neither reward nor punishment is to be expected.

3. T.A. 532.

yield of fruit. And this was reported to the Prophet. Then he *said : 'I am only a human being. When I give you a command in religious matters, you should obey it, but when I give* you a command in daily affairs, then (remember) that I am only a human being.' "[1]

(e) Words of the Messenger of God

In the field of historical criticism, applied to the *Hadith*-literature, Ahmad Khan appears to possess for a Muslim an unusually sharp eye. First of all he is aware of the fact that *Sagenbildung* is developed much quicker in the records of events. connected with founders of religion, saints, etc., than in secular history, and he acknowledges that soon after the death of Muhammad the conditions were favourable for extending the Prophet's sayings with what pious imagination wrought. And amongst the causes of it he enumerates : " . . . that people liked very much additions by which the Prophet gained a lustre of sanctity and glory ; that narrators of the events, deeds and words of the Prophet discovered that they themselves participated in the honour and praise they allotted to him ; that sometimes quarrels arose, and that then every group recorded traditions in support of its own tenets ; that wicked people forged traditions to please kings and princes ; that unbelievers issued traditions with fantastic contents in order to soil Islam "[2] Further on our author declares that the praiseworthy efforts of the compilers of the *Sahih* (the collections of canonical traditions) did not neutralize the committed wrongs, as "the criterion of the genuineness or falsehood of a *hadith*, set up by all of them, even by Muslim and Bukhārī, was that if they considered the traditionist (*rawis*) as reliable, they thought his *hadith* to be correct, and if they regarded him as unreliable, they thought his *hadith* to be false. But it should be taken into account that . . .

1. T.K. I, 14-15. 2. Cf. A.M. 128-29 ; T.A. 176.

there are three or four traditionists (for one *hadith*); and Mālik and Bukhārī knew only the traditionist from whom they received the *hadith*, and not the preceding. So one cannot be certain that all the traditionists were trustworthy, and that no mistake was made in handing down the text of a *hadith*."[1] Above this: "All the 'Ulama and *Muhaddithin* (tradition-experts) admit that the contents of the traditions are not to the letter, but to the spirit, i.e. the words in the related traditions are not the very words spoken by the Prophet of God, because it is possible that after all they contain words of the traditionists recorded by Bukhārī, Muslim or someone else; or is it not likely that here and there we will meet words of Bukhārī himself or some other collector of traditions?"[2]

Not only by throwing doubt on the trustworthiness of the traditionists, but also in his attempts at internal criticism in regard to the traditions, he gives evidence of acquaintance with Western views about this sacred literature of the Muslims. Thus he claims that "the subject related must have come under the actual ken of its first traditionists."[3] In another place he writes: "... we are not justified in saying such a *hadith* is from the Prophet whose contents are inconsistent with reality."[4]

One should not think, however, on the ground of the severe condemnation of forgery in traditions that the *ahadith* meant nothing to Ahmad Khan. Mostly he ends his discussions on this subject with statements like these: "... certainly I do not regard the traditions as highly as the Qur'ān. But all Muslims ought to be grateful for the exertions made by

1. A M. 96.
2. T.A. 185.
3. "Essay on Mohammadan Traditions," p. 14.
4. A.M. 132.

In one respect, however, Ahmad Khan fails to maintain objective standards of historical truth; for he brushes aside a priori "the stories which are incompatible with the honour of the Prophet." Here his faith gets the better of his reason!

the *Muhaddithin* in collecting them. Thanks to these people, we are acquainted with words and acts of the Prophet. But along with it we are obliged to investigate whether they are really the words and acts of the Prophet, or not. And if we are convinced that they are in fact words and acts of the Prophet, we bend our head before them without hesitation."[1]

(f) Man

(1) *The Value of Human Reason*

There is no doubt that Ahmad Khan respects human reason. In an article of the *Tahzib al-Akhlaq* on the thoughts of man,[2] he states that the Jews base their belief in the truth of Moses' preaching on the ground of the miraculous; that is, because he changed a stick into a serpent; and that the Christians believe that Christ was sent by God on the basis of his miraculous quickening the dead, his resurrection and his ascension to heaven, but that this all could not give him satisfactory certainty. After all, he could only obtain certainty from his reason (*'aql*), and that "therefore, wherever one goes or turns, reason remains the only base upon which knowledge, certainty and faith can be founded."

At the same time he admits that "the reason which God gave is not unlimited,"[3] and that there are "realities hidden from mental perception, beyond the reach of man. . . like the nature and attributes of God, the way in which the world came into being, the essence of spirit and soul."[4] This view is, according to him, corroborated by S. 2 : 29 ("and He taught Adam the names of all things"). This would point out that man can know only the "names" and not the

1. A.M. 97.
2. Cf. T.A. 15-20.
3. T.A. of the 25th March, 1895.
4. Ibid., of the 26th May, 1895.

essence (*haqiqat*) of the things (cf. T.A. 207).

(2) *The Problem of Free Will*

In the first volume of his Qur'ān-*tafsir*, written in 1880, Ahmad Khan shrinks from giving this problem a place in Theology, and he declares : "It is improper to use these verses (i.e. S. 2 : 5-6) or other verses as evidence for a discussion of the doctrine of Compulsion and Free Will. Questions whether man is constrained or free or constrained and free in his deeds are problems which have only to do with Psychology . . . It is wrong to derive from the Qur'ān any conclusion on account of this problem . . . The meaning of these words : 'As to the disbelievers . . . their hearts and their ears has God sealed up ; and over their eyes is a covering' is not to establish that man is constrained or free in his deeds, but to show man God's majesty and absoluteness."[1] But later on, in the sixth volume of this *Tafsir*, dating from 1895, and in the issue of the *Tahzib al-Akhlaq* of the 22nd Aug., 1895, i.e. towards the end of his life, when he is more inclined to yield to metaphysical meditations, he defines his theological position regarding the doctrine of Predestination. It seems that here he wants neither to limit God's omnipotence, nor to weaken man's responsibility for his deeds. On the one hand he states that "through His own free act God bestows a nature upon all the creatures whether man or animal or anything else," and that "the First Cause has knowledge of the conditions and deeds of all what exists in the world, of their past as well as of their future," while on the other hand he declares that "man can make a free use of all the potentialities entrusted to him." And to illustrate his views of the relation between the divine omniscience and the free will of man he makes this comparison: "Suppose that an astrologer, whose knowledge is so perfect that nothing of the future is concealed from him, were to say about

1. "Tafsir," I, 16-17.

somebody that he would die by drowning. Then, as the knowledge of the astrologer is true, his being drowned is inevitable, but it does not follow from this, that the astrologer compels that man to be drowned."[1]

And to make his point of view still more clear Ahmad Khan cites the following tradition about 'Abdullah b. 'Umar,[2] recorded in the *Kitab al-Milal wa'l-Nihal* of al-Murtadā[3] : "Some people said to 'Abdullah b. 'Umar : 'O Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān, there is people who commit adultery, drink wine, steal and *murder, and say* that this was part of God's knowledge; and I do not know what to think of it.' 'Abdullah b. 'Umar became angry and said : 'By God ! Indeed, it was part of God's knowledge that they would do so, but God's knowledge did not compel them to do those things. My father 'Umar b. al-Khattāb told me that he heard the Prophet stating : Knowledge of God is for you like the heaven which overshadows you, and the earth which carries you ; in the same way as you cannot escape from the earth and heaven you cannot be beyond the sphere of influence of God's knowledge, and in the same way as earth and heaven do not incite you to sins, the knowledge of God does not compel you to those sins.' "[4]

(3) *The Meaning of Worship*

That Ahmad Khan is not lacking piety becomes evident from what he mentions about the inner sense of the *Salaṭ.*[5] So he says : "The intention of worship is that the servant of

1. T.A. of the 22nd Aug., 1895.

2. The son of the second caliph who can be considered as a precursor of the Murji'a; cf. A. S. Tritton, "Muslim Theology" (1947), p. 43 : "The movement (i.e. the Murji'a) is a development of the views of the moderates like 'Abdullah b. Umar."

3. This tradition can also be found in "al-Mu'tazilah" (ed. by T. W. Arnold), (1902), pp. 8-9.

4. "Tafsir," 6 : 167.

5. See his brochure : "Israr al-Salat" (1895).

God should present his hands, feet, eyes, nose and intellect to God, who created him, and should remember Him, and should show his humility before Him in order that each time the majesty of God and the awareness of his own humility should be impressed on his heart, and his heart should become free from sins . . . . To recite prayers is as it were to appear in the presence of God, and, therefore, one must come before Providence who is the King of kings, with due respect and inner and outward purity." And from each part of the *salat*-ritual Ahmad Khan explains the symbolic meaning, e.g. : " . . . to lift both hands up to the ears means to say : I appear before Thee, leaving everything aside," etc.,[1] and our author concludes his treatise on worship : "So there is no better worship, in which the outward body as well as the inner powers are all engaged, than the *salat*, and, therefore, it is the highest form of worship."

Strongly influenced by deistic thought is Ahmad Khan's concept of the *du'a* (personal prayer) and its response. On it he wrote a separate tract called *al-Du'a wa'l Istijaba*. His account of *du'a* is : "It is to call upon God, to direct oneself to Him, to perceive His presence, to assert that one is His child and that He is worshipped in truth." As to the response of the *du'a* he rejects emphatically the idea that it implies the obtainment of the object prayed for. For in that case "two difficulties

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1. But along with it there are signs of a tendency in him not to stick too strictly to the various rules of the salat, for he distinguishes between its basic ("asli") rules (e.g. that a man should be pure of heart for the performance of the "salat"), and the rules "which in fact are not an essential part of it, but guarantee it (muhafiz) . . . The distinction in the two categories is clearly seen, when people are not enabled to observe those rules which are in a way guarantees of the essential part. During the Mutiny the prescript of ablution, standing, prosterations, and even Qur'an-recitation were omitted, but the concentration upon God and the presentation of the needs and humility which are essential for the salat were not omitted as long as people were alive." ("Majmu'a" I, 226-27).

In the "Hayat i Jawid" (2, 266) it is told that a friend of Ahmad Khan saw that the latter did not observe the "qibla"-direction at his prayer, and being inquired of it, Ahmad Khan recited S. 2 : 109, "Whichever way you turn, the face of God is there."

arise : (1) that the demand of thousands of prayers—though said with extreme humility and zeal—is not fulfilled, albeit God promises to hear prayers ; (2) what a man possesses, and what he does not possess, are decreed by God. Never can anything occur against those decrees. Therefore, if it were to be concluded that the answering of prayers means the fulfilment of demands, then the promise of God : 'Pray to Me and I will hear you' (S. 40 : 62) could never be true for demands which are not decreed." The purport of the hearing of the *du'a* our author limits to this, that by praying man receives consolation in trouble, and "when prayer causes him to concentrate his mind upon the might and majesty of God, then that power is created in him which overcomes all the restlessness and uneasiness in time of affliction, so that his patience and strength are increased."[1]

(4) *Ethics*

On the whole Ahmad Khan does not pay much attention to this topic. Yet two of his principles for Muslim life deserve mention.

First, according to the opinion of our reformer, the only binding rules for a Muslim are those which are laid down in the canonical (*mansusi*)[2] laws, while all the other prescripts are either based upon *ijtihad* (the decision of authoritative scholars of *fiqh*), or upon *qiyas* (deduction from analogy), or upon imaginary grounds, and belong to the realm of conjectures (*zanni*),[3] whereas they "are dogmas of persons who are exposed to error . . . It is possible that these men are right, and it is possible that they are wrong. We, however, are followers

1. "Tafsir" I, 10.

2. Cf. Lane on "nass" : " . . . . in the conventional language of the lawyers and the scholastic theologians : or a stature, or an ordinance, indicated by the manifest or plain meaning of words of the Qur'an and of the Sunnah."

3. See T.A. 532.

of Islam, not of views and opinions of X, Y and Z."[1]

Secondly, it appears, according to Ahmad Khan, that man works for his own salvation. So he states about the condition of the human soul *i.a.* : "By doing well and by sinning the soul instantly enjoys happiness or suffers affliction, as a mirror reflects immediately the image of an object put before it . . . After death, when the soul becomes separated from the body . . . it still keeps that nature or condition it had when, by means of breathing, it was associated with the body."[2] In short, "man's salvation depends wholly upon whether he uses the powers given by God to the best of his ability."[3]

1. "Majmu'a" I, 221.

With regard to the doctrine of "ijtihad" Ahmad Khan rejected and accepted to serve his own convenience. For, when he was hindered in his reforming aspirations by the regulations which the "mujtahidin" had once introduced into Islam, he rejected the principle of "ijtihad" ; but when it appeared that he himself could make good use of this principle in order to revise the Islamic legal code, one finds a statement like this : "By this erroneous belief (i.e. that the door of 'ijtihad' would be closed and that nowadays a 'mujtahid' would be superfluous) we do harm Islamic religion and society seriously. We should be aware of the fact that times change and that again and again we are confronted with new questions and new needs . . . In other words : today also we want 'mujtahidin.' " (T.A. 196).

2. T.A. of the 2nd Sept., 1894.

3. Ibid., p. 236.

Chapter 5

OPPOSITION TO AHMAD KHAN

"A maulawi in very straitened circumstances
Continued for years in search of a living ;
He wandered from place to place looking for employment.
But could not lay his hand on anything.
He tried his luck at editing a paper,
But this plan was not fated to succeed either.
He made hundreds of efforts to earn his bread,
But fortune never favoured him.
When he was quite at a loss which way to look,
Some kind Khizr[1] came forward to guide him.
Bending down he whispered in his ear,
'I hear that the works of Ahmad are in the press now.
Go ! rend them into pieces word by word,
Publish no matter what refuting them.
Then see how from every side and direction
Gold and silver will be showered upon you.' "[2]

The first indication of disapproval from the general public of one of Ahmad Khan's activities is shown in the indignation roused over an Urdu translation of Elphinstone's *History of*

1. Allusion to Khwaja Khizr, a legendary figure, regarded as a prophet skilled in divination.

2. Tr. by Nibaram Chandra Chatterjee ("The Qita'at of Hali," No. 21). These quatrains were probably inspired by the following anecdote of Ahmad Khan : "When someone who was in straitened circumstances asked Sir Sayyid for a recommendation for a post in the government, Sir Sayyid answered: 'It is not my habit to give recommendations, but I think the best thing to improve your income will be to write and publish a polemic against my Qur'an-tafsir ; God willing, it will be a good seller, and you will become a rich man.' " (H.J. I, 234).

India, published by the Scientific Society. In this work the term "fraud" was used in connection with Muhammad.[1] Even though at that place quotations had been inserted in the translation from the *Preliminary Discourse* of G. Sale, a passage from Colonel Kennedy[2] and the *Tarikh i Tabari*, in order to refute Elphinstone's assertion[3] the disturbed minds could not be appeased by them.

While this event produced charges of disbelief and apostasy, the publication of his treatise *Ahkam i Ta'am i Ahl i Kitab*[4] shortly after gained him the title of a Christian.

Yet up to 1869 the voices of opponents were only occasionally heard, and they are insignificant when compared with the storm of antagonism which raged afterwards. This storm was preceded by the already more serious opposition created by his journey to England[5] and the contents of his letters from London, which were published in the *Aligarh Institute Gazette*. His friendly intercourse with the hated foreigners and conquerors of the Mughal Empire was unendurable for the average Muslim. Besides this he no longer seemed to observe the Islamic food regulations ; and his apologetic in elucidation of this offensive behaviour[6] did not, and could not, convince simple-minded

1. See Vol. I, p. 493 of this work : "although he (i.e. Muhammad) was provoked by opposition to support his pretensions by fraud, and in time became habituated to hypocrisy and imposture . . ."

2. Supposedly here the following sentence of an article of this author In the Bombay Literary Transactions, vol. 3, is meant : "Its (i.e. in the History of Tabari) description of the mental agitation of Mahomet, his fancied visions, and his alarm at the alienation of his own reason, bear the liveliest marks of truth and nature."

3. See H.J. 2, 268-69. 4. See p. 23.

5. Cf. the following lines in "The Homeward Mail" of 26th Sept., 1870 : "Many of the Indian Mussulmans are children of Hindoo mothers, and inherit all their caste prejudices . . . Syed Ahmad accomplished a voyage to England in direct contravention of the caste observances."

6. In his "Musafiran i London" (Travellers to London) he states i.a. concerning the question of the eating of strangled hens : "The cook and the butcher (on board the ship) are English. From inquiry I heard that big animals whose blood is abundant, like a sheep, a goat, a ram, etc., are slaughtered by piercing the carotid artery, because in the opinion of the

Muslims of his innocence. Another offence was his exuberant praise of the English,[1] accompanied with sighs heaved over the lamentable state of his fellow-countrymen,[2] a criticism which hurt severely their touchy pride.

But it was the opinions on religious subjects stated in the *Tahzib al-Akhlaq*, and later on in his Qur'ān commentary which raised a real hurricane of protests and outbursts of wrath from the representatives of the old school. "Sir Sayyid was called a heretic, atheist, Christian, Necharī (Urduized form of Naturist), materialist, unbeliever, and Antichrist (*dajjal*), and in every town and village *fatwas* were issued by the Maulawīs which declared him to be a *kafir*."[3] One of these Maulawīs, 'Alī Bakhsh Khān, even made a pilgrimage to Mecca with the special purpose of putting forward two questions before the *muftis* (persons who supply *fatwas*) of the four schools in order to get a *fatwa* to his discredit, viz. (i) about Ahmad Khan's negation

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English it is not lawful that too much blood be shed, and about fowls they say that these animals do not have as much blood as the quadrupeds, and that they resemble marine animals . . . . Fowls, therefore, are not slaughtered by them ; they only wring their necks. But whereas the way in which the Christians think they should kill fowls is the same as that according to which we think we should kill fish and locusts, so in my opinion, orthodox Muslims can eat them according to the Shari'a. Therefore, neither I nor my companions have scruples about eating flesh of both kinds." In the "Tahzib al-Akhlaq" this question is broached once more, and this time Ahmad Khan defends his position on philological grounds Referring to S. 5 : 4 he says : "Now I declare that according to my opinion the 'ta' in the four words (i.e. 'wa'l-munkhaniqat,' etc.) is the 'ta' of the feminine gender, and that the omitted noun is 'bahima' in the sense of ox, quadruped, or graminivore. Hence this verse states : Forbidden to you is the strangled 'bahima' the 'bahima' killed by a blow, by a fall, and by goring. Consequently, birds do not come under this regulation." (p. 228)

1. See for instance a statement like this : "All good things, spiritual and worldly, which can be found in man, have been bestowed by the Almighty on Europe, and especially on England." (Graham, 127).

2. See this famous dictum of his : "Without flattering the English, I can truly say that the natives of India, high and low, merchants and petty shopkeepers, educated and illiterate, when contrasted with the English in education, manners, and uprightness, are as like them as a dirty animal is to an able and handsome man." (Graham, 125-26).

3. H J. 2, 278.

of the empiric existence of the devil and the angels, and his views of slavery, the *mi'raj* (Muhammad's heavenly journey), the *Shaqq i Sadr* (the splitting of the chest of the Prophet), and the permissibility of eating strangled hens ; (2) about the question of whether it was allowable to support the foundation of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, started by a man who claimed that as long as the Muslims do not adopt modern philosophy and European ideas they are uneducated. The substance of the answer given to the first question was : "This man is erring and causes people to err, or rather he is an agent of the devil, and wants to seduce the Muslims, and God regards him as a greater obstacle (*fitna*) to true belief than the Jews and Christians" ; while in the second case the verdict was : "It is not allowed to support this College—may God damn its founder ! and if this College has been finished, it must be demolished and its founder and supporters severely punished, and everyone who defends Islam must oppose this College as much as he can."[1]

Besides these *fatwas* there appeared a whole literature of refutations and polemics against the New Light man. Special papers were issued as a counterpoise of the *Tahzib al-Akhlaq* : in Cawnpore the *Nur al-Afaq*, and the *Nur al-Anwar*, in Muradabad the *Lauh i Mahfuz*, in Agra the *Terhawin*, etc.

The main points at issue in the controversy between our heretic and his adversaries in India were :

(1) *The Aligarh College*. In 1873 Imdād 'Alī, deputy collector of Cawnpore and one of the most dogged opponents, had already started a campaign against the College *in statu nascendi*, and he declared : "If it is true that Sayyid Ahmad disagrees with the Muslims in many tenets, then it is impossible for them to approve suddenly of any activity of his. And so

1. See H.J. 2, 286-88.

long as the Muslims are not certain that through his activity he will not be enabled to propagate his heretical doctrines, they will never be able to consent to it. From the preparations and intimations regarding the proposed College there is no indication of one obtaining such an assurance. On the contrary, the Muslims have a strong suspicion that by means of it he is desirous of giving strength to his heretical teachings, since the College will be his creation, its members his followers. In the College he will introduce those activities he thinks right for the promotion of culture, and those doctrines which he considers to represent genuine Islam, and not the teaching of those subjects which he regards as uncivilized and those tenets which in his eyes are false."[1]

(2) *His idea of God.*[2] A polemic, written by the above-mentioned 'Alī Bakhsh, attacks *i.a.* Ahmad Khan's concept of God, and says : " In the opinion of Ahmad Khan) the Creator is not the Originator of everything, but is merely the First Cause, the Cause of the first thing caused ; everything else is produced by its own cause . . . Thus it comes to this that it would be wrong to say that God creates everything."[3]

(3) *His views of the Qur'an and its contents.*[4] A certain Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq wrote in 1888 a Qur'an-*tafsir* which was mainly occasioned by the appearance of Ahmad Khan's

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1. "Bi Jawab i Imdad al-Afaq," p. 17.

Also certain Britishers thwarted the plans of the proposed College. E.g. in the English paper published in India, "The Indian Observer," articles were written against it, and in the "Tahzib" of the 1st Oct., 1872, Ahmad Khan replied to one of them, and said : "The writer of an article in 'The Indian Observer,' dated the 28th Sept., delights to call us arrogant and bigoted, and states that these qualities prevent us from availing ourselves of the advantages of education afforded in Government Institutions . . . We admit that we are both arrogant and bigoted, but this is no reason why we should not adopt a system of education which may not impair our arrogance and bigotry, but at the same time further our advancement in learning."

2. Cf. sub-section 3 (b), Chap. 4.
3. "Ta'id al-Islam" (1873), p. 25.
4. Cf. sub-section 3 (c), Chap. 4.

Tafsir. In the Introduction to that commentary, called *Tafsir Fath al-Mannan*, the author attacks Ahmad Khan's rejection of the bodily existence of devils and angels, his denial of miracles, his conception of the process of revelation, etc., with arguments which excel more in ardour for maintaining the traditional views than in wit and originality. To give an example of his way of reasoning : When the author wants to refute Ahmad Khan's statement that *ayat* in the Qur'ānic idiom can only mean "divine command," and never "wonder,"[1] he writes : "In the Qur'ān itself there are many places where *ayat* can only be rendered by 'wonder,' e.g. in the verse, 'And this she-camel of God is a sign (wonder) for you' (S. 7 : 71 ; 11 : 67) . . . and you (i.e. Ahmad Khan) must now admit, without having any excuse, that, whereas here the word *ayat* refers to the she-camel, it neither means 'verses of the Qur'ān,' nor 'a divine command,' and your statement : 'because that she-camel was not actually a wonder' is completely wrong, for that she-camel, which came after his having prayed for it was a great wonder for Sālih."[2]

More spirited remarks one meets in the polemic of Muhammad Ihtishām al-Dīn, entitled *Ta'id al Islam* (1881). The first thesis he brings to the fore is : "Sir Sayyid leaves aside sound traditions which contradict his views, and accepts spurious ones which agree with his views," and, in order to verify this statement, he points out how Ahmad Khan, as evidence for his assumption that the *mi'raj* was not an actual event, but a vision, adduces a *hadith* which goes back to 'Ā'ishā, but whose chain of traditionists, in the opinion of authoritative Muslim scholars, is broken. Also, that at the time of the *mi'raj* either 'Ā'ishā was not born, or, if she was born, she was a little child at the utmost, and not yet a wife of the Prophet.[3] When Ahmad

1. Cf. sub-section 3 (c), Chap. 4.
2. P. 13 of that Introduction.
3. "Ta'id al-Islam," pp. 1-2.

Khan writes in his *Tafsir* that the most plausible explanation of S. 2 : 261[1] is that this is a record of a vision seen by Nehemiah in time of trouble in order to assure the prophet that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, then Ihtishām al-Dīn observes : "When Sir Sayyid becomes helpless, he is compelled to call something a vision, but impartial people know how absurd this explanation is, because neither in the text of the Qur'ān is there any indication from which it could be understood that we have here an account of a vision, nor in the *hadith* is this meaning stated. How can those words which clearly point to a report by an eye-witness, without any grounds, be referred by Sir Sayyid to a vision."[2] Not exclusively in polemics the provoking views are criticized. Sometimes they are commented incidentally ; and in that case it is generally done by authors who accept a great deal of Ahmad Khan's ideas. In the *Tafsir al-Qur'an bi'l-Qur'an* (1903) of the Ahmadī 'Abd al-Hakīm Khān, Qur'ānic accounts of miracles are often explained in a rationalistic way, but that of Virgin Birth is left as it is. After having mentioned the view of Sir Sayyid on it, the author states : "It is absolutely true that the laws of Nature which one may call the *sunna* or creation of God, cannot be violated . . . However, some laws may be known to man, many are unknown to him. The error of the Sayyid is that he thinks *all* the laws of the Creator to be defined and known. Granted, if God Himself had defined a law that without a father no birth is possible, the

1. "Or like him who passed by a city which had been laid in ruins. 'How,' said he, 'shall God give life to this city, after it has been dead ?' And God caused him to die for a hundred years, and then raised him to life. And God said : 'How long have you tarried ?' He said : 'I have tarried a day or a part of a day.' He said : 'Nay, you have tarried a hundred years. Look at your food and your drink, they are not spoiled ; and look at your ass : in order that we may make you a sign to the people ; and look at the bones (of your ass), how We will raise them, then clothe them with flesh.' And when this was shown to him, he said : 'I acknowledge that God has power to do all things.' "

2. "Ta'id al-Islam," p. 23.

matter would be settled . . . This event (of the Virgin Birth) took place according to the *sunna* of God, and on account of its rare occurrence it falls under the head of peculiar *ayat* . . . and as long as the true causes are not known, it is called 'strange'" (p. 247f).

(4) *His teachings about the du'a.*[1] The most sagacious refutation of the opinions of our reformer was composed by the notorious Indian heretic Mīrzā Ghulām Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadiyyah movement. In a polemic called *Barakat al-Du'a* (1893?) this divine analyses and criticizes two brochures of Ahmad Khan, viz. *al-Du'a wa'l-Istijaba* and *Tahrir fi Usul al Tafsir*. His main argument against the assertion of the latter that the *du'a* cannot imply any actual effect upon the fixed divine decrees is that : " . . . although everything in the world is ordained, yet the divine power creates secondary means (*asbab*) of obtaining an object sought for, as for instance medicines." Then the Mīrzā asks : "Since in the matter of divine decrees, the same problem arises with regard to the efficacy of prayer as with regard to the efficacy of drugs, can Sir Sayyid nevertheless pretend that medical knowledge is completely useless, and that a good physician accomplishes nothing with his drugs?" When one takes turpeth, scammony, senna or Mauris cerasa and it acts as a purgative (and effects a cure) . . . why then should God be quite deaf to the earnest prayers of a chosen servant, and render them completely ineffective? . . . And if doubt arises when some prayers seem to have no result, then I say that this also happens with medicines : do medicines keep the gate to death closed? . . . But in spite of this, who can assert that they are without effect? It is true that everything is ordained, but apart from the decrees, there exist also secondary means,

1. See sub-section 3 [f (3)], second para (Chap. 4).

material as well as spiritual."[1]

Not every dispute against the ideas of Ahmad Khan was carried on in the usual tart tone. For, besides the mentioned polemics which were chiefly intended to crush our reformer, there has also been a friendly correspondence and discussion between Ahmad Khan and his best friend Muhsin al-Mulk.[2]

1. *See "Barakat al Du'a," pp. 3-8.*

*In the second part of this controversial writing the Mirza reviews the "Tahrir fi Usul al-Tafsir," and declares that here Ahmad Khan goes to the opposite extreme : "In the treatise on answer to prayer he overstresses the divine decrees, and so to speak, he brushes aside the secondary means . . . In this writing Sir Sayyid takes, as it were, no account of the divine decrees, because he confers an independent existence upon everything, so that apparently every matter drops out of the hands of God, and He has no longer power to change and alter it." ("Barakat al-Du'a," p. 12). Although the Mirza wrongly contrasts these two treatises of Ahmad Khan, he is uncontestably warranted to observe that in that second treatise through his zeal for deducing laws of Nature from the Qur'an, the author eliminates actually the eventuality of a free divine intervention into history ; and the critic points out the irony present in a trend of thought in which through unbalanced over-emphasis of God's omnipotence the opposite, viz. a limitation of the divine power, of what was striven after is reached.

2. A complete edition of this correspondence was published in 1915 by Muhammad 'Uthman Maqbul under the title "Mukatabat al-Khullan" (correspondence of friends). The first part of this correspondence is also found in the "Tahrir fi Usul al-Tafsir" (writing on the principles of Qur'an-exegesis ; for, the fixation of the principles of Qur'an exegeses by Ahmad Khan has been the consequence of the first two letters of Muhsin al-Mulk. This reaction to objections made to his theories is characteristic of our hero : If he replies to polemics, dissentient views and so on (mostly he does not react at all), then he confines himself to using every effort to explain his own position as plain as possible, without entering into the arguments of the opponent !

In the first letter, dated the 9th Aug , 1892, Muhsin al-Mulk says i.a. : "You abuse and revile the Muslim commentators and call them imitators of the Jews. But you trust the sayings of the atheists of today to such a degree that you rely completely on their doctrines and you turn all the verses of the Qur'an from their obvious meaning . . . although neither the context nor the words nor Arabic idiom corroborate your interpretation." In the second letter, dated the 19th Sept., 1892, he adds the warning that attempts to meet modern scholars half-way will be in vain, because as long as "you believe in God, the Prophet, the Resurrection and other religious tenets, even if you may have made some progress in natural science, you are still in their opinion weak-hearted and feeble ; and if there is a difference (between you and me) it will be only a question of degree ; such people

In this we do not hear the voice of one who wants to play the former nasty trick or anything of that sort, but here we perceive the despair of one whose heart was grievously wounded[1] by the erring views of a beloved friend. It is in the fourth and up to the seventh letter of this correspondence, written in the month of August 1895, that Muhsin al-Mulk makes his objections to Ahmad Khan's writing on *du'a*, and remarks: "What is the use of a god who can neither hear our prayers nor fulfil our needs beyond the usual means? In that case to pray to him would be the same as to kneel before a lifeless idol of stone." At the end he states his own view of this hard problem, and writes: "Although the Lord has predetermined everything . . . yet room is left for our acts, industry and labour . . . And as the things ordained are concealed, our needs and acts are needed for bringing them to light . . . In other words, when, in spite of the fact that we are aware that whatever is predetermined will surely occur, we still feel that we ought to consider our acts, industry and labour; in short, our voluntary good works in the material world as a means of bringing the divine ordinations to light, then why should we not also consider the spiritual exercise of prayer efficacious in the world of the spirit? Why should we give up prayer because of the thought that whatever has been predetermined will take place? . . . And when everything is hidden from our eyes and our knowledge about this empiric world is very limited and defective, then why should we deny that there are in the spiritual world recourses and unknown secrets, and that there exists

will consider me more weak-hearted and feeble, because I regard God to be the granter of all needs, and prayer a means for getting a desired object, and hold Gabriel for an angel who brings revelations, and prophethood for a rank given by God. They will regard you to be stronger of heart and more courageous than me, but they will not call you a person who is altogether free from a belief in things he learned in childhood."

1. In the beginning of his second letter he exclaims: "Give me a medicine for my pain . . . but do not hurt me anew so that I must scream and bawl still more."

a relation between God and His worshippers in both directions, and that prayer has an influence in this relation ? "

Even people from other parts of the Muslim world were startled by the irritating opinions of Ahmad Khan. The famous preacher of the Pan-Islamic idea, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-97), heard about the theories of our reformer when in 1879 he was exiled by the English to India (Haidarabad, later on Calcutta). In the ephemeral, but influential periodical, *al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa* ("the Firm Handle" which he, who believes in God and does what is right, clutches—a name and symbol, derived from S. 2 : 257 ; 31 : 21) which he issued in 1884 in connection with Muhammad 'Abduh, he hurls vitriolic attacks against the Indian heretic and his followers in an article entitled *al-Dhariyun fi'l-Hind,* and writes : " He (i.e. Ahmad Khan) passed himself off as a Naturist (materialist) and proclaimed that the only existence is blind Nature, that God does not form part of this being (this is a manifest error), and that all the prophets were Naturists who did not believe in the God of the Scriptures (God forbid !) ; he called himself a *Nechari* (Naturist) and began to attract sons of the rich, who were thoughtless youths. Some of them gave ear to him, slipped away from the bonds of the Glorious Law and gave rein to their beastly passions. His ideas were agreeable to the English authorities, and they, seeing in him a useful instrument to demoralize the Muslims, began to praise and honour him, helped him to build a college in Aligarh, and called it the college of the Muslims, that it should be a trap in which they might catch the sons of the believers in order to rear them in the ideas of this man Ahmad Khan Bahādur. . . . and he (i.e. the latter) made propaganda for the abolition of all religions . . . and proclaimed : 'Nature, nature,' in order to cause people to believe that Europe made progress in culture, civilization, knowledge and techniques and excelled in power and ability, only by giving up religion . . . and when I stayed in India, I

recognized that some unstable minds were deceived by the idle words of this man and his disciples, and I wrote a treatise to explain their pernicious teachings and what would come out of them, and I proved that religion is the basis of culture and the foundation of civilization, and my treatise was printed in Hindustānī and Persian.[1] Ahmad Khan and his followers took off the garb of religion, and by making propaganda to induce others to do the same, they spread unbelief among the Muslims, and carried on to undermine their (i.e. the Muslims') tenets. They made their deviations still worse by sowing discord between Indian and other Muslims, and they wrote various writings against the Islamic caliphate[2]; and these materialists are unlike

1. This is a polemical tract against the materialists, first published in Persian (Bombay, 1298/1881), and then in Urdu (Calcutta, 1883) and in 1886 was translated into Arabic by Muhammad 'Abduh under the title, "Refutation of Materialism and Exposure of its Germs of Corruption and Proof that Religion is the Basis of Culture and Unbelief the Corruption of civilization." Several pages in it al-Afghani devotes to fighting against the Necharis, but without mentioning the name of Ahmad Khan. Here also one finds many false imputations, and the author writes i.a.: "And with the specious theories which the Necharis pour out upon the Muslims, they sow seeds of mischief in the souls, and soon after being planted they become a 'Dari' (i.e. a bitter herb which is said to grow in hell to nourish reprobates) and a 'Zaqqum' (i.e. a tree of hell whose detestable fruits must serve as nourishment of reprobates). In this way this corruption is spread over the individuals of the nation who come under the influence of these sectarians. Nobody knows from where this corruption penetrated into his heart and this treachery, falsehood and deceit were divulged amongst them; and they do not know how to behave, and they commit horrible deeds unworthy of human nature. They commit those atrocities openly without consulting their conscience, and though everyone of them professes with his lips that he believes in the Last Day, and thinks that this is his faith and that of his ancestors, yet his conduct is that of someone who seems no longer to believe in a life hereafter, because unconsciously he is infected by the tenets of the necharis." ["Risalat fi Ibtal i Mazhab al-Dahriyin" (1886), p. 26].

2. After the victories of Turkey in the Graeco-Turkish war (1897) national emotions of subject Muslims all over the world were vehemently stirred, and pan-Islamic ideals arose before the mental eye of the Indian Muslims too. In order to curb these passions Ahmad Khan wrote instantly various articles in the "Aligarh Institute Gazette" and the "Tahzib al-Akhlaq," in which he argued that, excepting the known Muslim rulers in the first thirty years after the death of Muhammad, nobody should be styled a caliph of the Prophet, and that the Indian Muslims could not consider themlves subjects of Sultan 'Abdul Hamid Khan.

the materialists in Europe, for he who abandons his religion, in Western countries, remains patriotic, and he does not lack zeal to defend his fatherland against foreign aggression . . . Ahmad Khan and his friends urge people to give up religion, and in front of them they speak slightingly of the welfare of their country and represent foreign despotism as acceptable and strive at effacing the traces of ardour for religion and nationality."[1]

1. "Al-'Urwat al-Wuthqa," Cairo ed. (1928), pp. 474-75.

Chapter 6

AHMAD KHAN AND CHRISTIANITY

Contact of religious-minded people of the East with the Western world implicitly requires from them the fixation of a standpoint in regard to Christianity. Ahmad Khan made no exception to this rule. The way, however, in which he clothed his views of the Christian doctrines, was new and unknown. He wrote a Bible-commentary, a thing which had not yet been done by any other Muslim.

The primal cause of his starting this work was recognition of the fact that the Muslims held their debates with the Christian missionaries equipped with only secondhand knowledge about Christianity. To remedy this defect Ahmad Khan bought various standard works of Christian scholars,[1] took a person with knowledge of English into his service in order to have the essential parts of those books translated, and employed a Jew to teach him Hebrew. After these preparations he wrote his commentary, remarkable for a tolerance which is appropriate to its political mission of bringing rulers and ruled into accord (see supra pp. 21-22), as well as for its broadminded attitude toward religion, which is a reflexion of the author's early background.[2] Thus he could declare to the missionary

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1. I.a. Horne's "Introduction to the Critical Study of the Holy Scriptures," Commentaries of d'Oyly and R. Mant, R. Watson, Th. Scott, Beausobre & Lenfant, S. Patrick, J. Pearson, Sh. Stackhouse . . , Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History of the Second Century," W. Muir's "Church History," and works of Unitarians, as e.g. N. Lardner.

2. Mir Müttaqi, the father of Ahmad Khan, was "a man with liberal ideas" ("az dmanish admi") ; see H J. I, 18, and this set a stamp on his children.

J. M. Arnold in a letter that he began this work because of his disapproval of the fact that "the Muslims of India always considered and believed the scriptures to be worthless, fabulous and a useless collection of books."[1]

In the first volume of the Commentary the mild views of Ahmad Khan soon become apparent from the position he takes with regard to *tahrif.*[2] Here he chooses the side of the least militant group of Muslim theologians, and refuses to believe that the Jews and Christians corrupted the Holy Scriptures intentionally or unintentionally. He attempts as much as he can to bring Christian exegesis of the Bible into agreement with Muslim opinions. To this end he quotes in columns side by side with the Bible-text sayings derived from the Qur'ān and *Hadith* which are of similar content. And indignantly he turns himself to left-wing Bible-critics, like J. W. Colenso (1814—83) and F. C. Baur (1792-1860) who dare to doubt the authenticity of passages in the books of the Bible. Thus he brands the latter as a man "whose heart is devoid of the Holy Ghost,"[3] on account of his denying the authorship of the gospel of St. Matthew to St. Matthew.

The tolerant attitude displayed in this commentary is also obvious when statements made in it are compared with others in later works on the same subjects, e.g. (a) As for God's resting on the seventh day of his creation, Ahmad Khan comments on Gen. 2 : 2 that it "quite agrees with the correspond-

1. See J. M. Arnold, "The Koran and the Bible" (1866), p. 481.

2. This is a principle of Islamic dogmatics which goes back to those places in the Qur'an where Muhammad, in reply to criticism and ridicule from the Jews that his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures must be defective, pretended that the people of the Scriptures had twisted ("harrafa") the sacred books. In establishing the "tahrif"-doc rine, however, the Muslim scholars disagreed. Some of them (Biruni, Ibn Hazm, et al.) understood by it a real alteration of the text by the Jews and Christians, but other Muslim divines (Tabari, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Ibn Khaldun, et al.) confine it to erroneous interpretations of the texts.

3. T.K. 3, 25.

ing passage in the Qur'ān,[1] viz. that He created nothing more afterwards." But in his Qur'ān-commentary the idea that God rested on the seventh day appears to be totally unacceptable for him! See infra pp. 108-09. (b) As for Christian ethics, Ahmad Khan comments on St. Mt. 5 : 44 : "Some people criticize this rule (saying) that it is against the laws of Nature that a man could love his enemy as much as a friend, and that either it should be admitted that this rule is an extreme exaggeration, or that it is something unnatural and impracticable. But this criticism is not right, and it is not contradictory to the laws of Nature. All the situations with which Christ himself has been confronted are a sufficient proof that a true love for enemies exists. But leave this aside, and look at the conduct of his disciples and at the 'Companions of the Platform,'[2] or even look at other reverend men and saints who came after them . . . Since there are a lot of people who put this command into practice, then how can this command be incompatible with the laws of Nature ?"[3] For his opposite views on this topic in his Qur'ān-*tafsir*, see infra pp. 108-10.

The Bible-commentary consists of three parts. The first deals with the principal question : Which attitude should the Muslim adopt towards the biblical writings. In the second part the actual commentary begins, and here Ahmad Khan gives his notes on Genesis 1-11. The third part contains the author's remarks on the gospel of St. Matthew, chapters 1 to 5. No further volumes were published thereafter, though at first he had the firm intention of writing a complete commentary of the Bible.[4] Probably on account of the small interest the public took in this undertaking he lost enthusiasm for it.

1. S. 10 : 3.

2. " Devotees, seated on the 'bench' of the mosque at Madina in the time of the Prophet." ("Enc. of Islam," 4, 681).

3. T.K. 3, 128.

4. See T.K. 1, 63.

become liable to sin, and the issues of sin would be harmful for the innocent first human pair!

(2) A proof of Mu'tazilite zeal to protect the conception of God from anthropomorphisms can be found in the interpretation of the words *be salmenu kidmutenu* in Gen. 1 : 26.[1] The author says that at this place *selem* should be taken in its original sense of 'shadow.' And then he renders Gen. 1 : 26 thus : "God said : 'We make man in our shadow, similar to our own likeness,'" and he adds to it this argumentation : "This expression clearly shows that God is not to be regarded as a human body with hands, feet, eyes, nose and ears, but that man, being created in the shadow of God (and consequently of very little worth when compared to Him) bears, in a very slight proportion, certain resemblance to Him in attributes such as knowledge, mercy, sovereignty, intelligence, justice, power, etc."

(3) The exposition of Ahmad Khan with regard to the historical significance of Christ is built on the Muslim doctrine that at the proper moment God sent an apostle to every nation (cf. S. 10 : 48 ; 16 : 38). And so the author shows how at the beginning of the Christian era in Palestine the time was ripe for "a man to be born who would teach the people spiritual purity and enlightenment," for in those days the commands of God were so neglected and the religious tenets so corrupted that with good reason the parable of St. Mt., "The blind guides the blind," could be applied to the condition of the Jews.[2]

(4) Our commentator proves again to be a true Muslim when he warns of the danger lest divinity should be attributed to Christ, and so he gives this elucidation of the sonship of Christ: "The right exegesis (of St. Mt. 3 : 17) is this that . . . (in the Western world) 'father' is a term applied to the originator of something . . . The son is he whom God has formed with His

1. See T.K 2, 91-92.
2. Ibid. 3, 2.

hands . . . If we would express it in Arabic idiom, then 'father' means *rab* (Lord), and 'son' *al-'abd al-maqbul* (the chosen servant). And these meanings agree exactly with the application of these terms in the Old and New Testaments, as can clearly be seen from these texts: I Chron. 22: 10; St. Mt. 18; 14; St. Luke 6: 36; 12: 32."[1] And should the first three chapters of St. Mt. leave scope for a double meaning in the doctrine of Christ's sonship, Chapter 4 is hailed by the author as being decisive evidence of the Muslim point of view, for: "If Christ were God, what then could be the purport of the trials by the Devil? . . . But if Christ is regarded as a prophet of God—as we Muslims regard him—then the whole meaning of it becomes clear."[2] And referring to St. Mt. 4: 10b, Ahmad Khan declares triumphantly that this verse manifestly demonstrates that "all worship is for God only, and for no one else."[3]

Both in the Bible-commentary and the Qur'ān-*tafsir*, Ahmad Khan takes the opportunity to develop his views in regard to Christ, particularly concerning the supernatural events and aspects ascribed to him. As a matter of fact, once again all his efforts are taken up with demythologizing these accounts. For instance:

(1) With respect to the creation of a bird by the child Jesus,[4] as related in S. 3 : 43: "Out of clay will I—i.e. Jesus—

1. See T.K. 3, 80.
In his Qu'ran-"tafsir" (2, 29) Ahmad Khan explains the origin of Christ's epithet "Son of God" in this way: "Amongst the Greeks it was commonly held that a very holy and reverend person should be called 'Son of God': Hercules, Romulus, Pythagoras, Plato are all called sons of a Greek god . . . When the disciples intended to spread the Christian religion by means of the Greek language, they had to give Christ such a title of honour."

2. T. K. 3, 84.

3. Ibid. 3, 91.

4. For this story see the apocryphal gospels "Evang. Thomae," Ch. 2 and "Evang. Infantiae Arab," Ch. 36, 46.

make an imitated bird; and I will breathe into it, and it shall become, with the permission of God, a bird," Ahmad Khan applies acute grammatical reasoning and states that the *fa* in *fa-yakunu* (and it shall become) is not a *fa* of conjunction (*'atif*), but a *fa* of separation (*tafri'*, and that according to the Arabic philologists a *fa tafri'* implies that the becoming or the effect of the thing separated cannot be considered on having taken place unless other proof is available; and in S. 3 : 43 such additional proof is missing . . . In this way the author considers himself justified in concluding: "From the way in which the Qur'ān relates this event it becomes clear that it did not actually take place, but that it was merely a fancy of Jesus when he played with other children."[1]

(2) As regards the Virgin Birth: one of the verses in the Qurā'n which apparently indicates Muhammad's belief in the miraculous conception of Mary is S. 21 : 91. "And her (i.e. Mary) who kept her maidenhood, and into whom We breathed of Our spirit." Here Ahmad Khan settles the thing quickly by assuming that "kept her maidenhood" does not mean that she had no intercourse with any man, but it means that she had only intercourse with her husband."[2]

(3) As for his speculations on the death of Christ: he precludes the possibility of the resurrection and ascension. Our author adds a new hypothesis to the existing conjectures which Muslims have suggested with respect to the crucifixion of Jesus,[3] and argues: "Crucifixion itself does not cause the death of a man, because only the palms of his hands, or the palms of his hands and feet are pierced. The real cause of

1. See "Tafsir," 2, 236-39.

2. "Tafsir," 2, 38.

3. The constant belief of the Muslims is that it was not Jesus himself who was crucified, but somebody else in his shape and resemblance. About the person who became Christ's substitute on the cross all kinds of guesses are suggested by them.

death is that when someone is hanged on the cross for four or five days, he dies because of the pains of the pierced hands and feet, combined with the endured hunger, thirst and exertion . . . When we bring the whole event into historical connection, it is clear that Christ did not die on the cross, but something happened there which caused people to believe that he died . . . After three or four hours Christ was taken down from the cross, and it is certain that at that moment he was still alive. Then the disciples concealed him in a very secret place, out of fear of the enmity of the Jews . . . and they spread the rumour that Christ ascended to heaven."[1]

The difference of opinion held by Ahmad Khan concerning these Christian tenets and beliefs can be explained as an apology for the views that Muslim theology holds on the same matters. It appears however also that in spite of his sincere intention to adopt a tolerant attitude towards Christianity he could not continuously suppress his sentiments,[2] and in some passages in the commentary on the Qur'ān he strikes an unmistakable polemic tone. For example, he says that the biblical idea that God rested on the seventh day of His creation implies that God

1. "Tafsir," 2. 43, et seq.

2. Christian missionaries who were not always free from aspirations wherein the end must justify the means, often fell into disrepute with him. Especially when in time of calamity such as famine, the former tried to snatch Muslim and Hindu orphans in order to christianize them. A fiercer accusation of perpetrating such practices addressed to the missionaries appears in one of his articles in which he writes: "The padres who are found everywhere in our country, and who get a great deal of money from Christian nations for the propagation of Christianity seize the opportunity to christianize such orphans . . . and immediately baptize these innocent children . . . If a young man who has reached the years of discretion chooses to become either Christian or Muslim there is no reason for sorrow or reproach, but when little children in such a miserable condition are cut off from their entire community and family, for whom they no longer exist, and by compulsion are deprived of the happiness which lies in participating in the life of their own people, then it is something quite deplorable and distasteful, and far from what is human and righteous." (T.A. 591).

became weary after his work of creating during the six days previous, and that this is incompatible with the conception of God's omnipotence and majesty. The following verse from the Qur'ān eliminates any such idea of limitation: 'and certainly We created the heaven and earth and what is between them in six days, and there touched Us no fatigue.' "[1]

In the Qur'ān-*tafsir* Ahmad Khan's judgment of Christian ethics is severe. He says: "In the Gospel it is written: 'If someone strikes your right cheek, turn your left cheek to him as well.' Indeed, this is a splendid ethical conception . . . If everyone were to act in this manner, evil would vanish from the earth. But when would this ethical level be reached? (Never! It is only theoretically possible, and represents an ideal beyond the scope of human attainment . . . not one precept of the Christian religion was put into practice, and the religion itself is the cause of bloodshed, cruelty, injustice and evil worse than any committed by beasts, and perhaps without precedent. The beautiful prescripts on which it was based bear no fruit, for they are contrary to the laws of Nature."[2]

Irrespective of these impulses toward polemics which do occasionally occur, one may sum up by saying that on the whole Ahmad Khan's attitude towards Christianity is fair, and com-

1. S. 50: 37.

Cf. I. Goldziher in "Gedenkbuch zur Erinnerung an David Kaufmann" (1900), p. 90 : "Es ist kaum anzunehmen, dass in dem Widerstreit Muhammeds gegen die biblische Sabbachauffassung und ubung ihn lediglich die Scheu vor der 'Rast Gottes' hervorzutretenden anthropopathischen Gottesauffassung geleitet hat. Erst die spatere Dogmatik und Polemik, sowie im Laufe ihrer Entwickelung ausgepragte Hadit-Versionen eignen ihm diesen Gesichtspunkt zu, den er ja durch die der Erzahlung vom Sechstagewerk hinzugefugte Klausel ('dann strebte er nach dem Throne') [this phrase, repeated six times in the Qu'ran, i.a. in S. 10: 3, is for Ahmad Khan the passage quoted in support of affirming the biblical view, represented in Gen. 2 : 2! See pp. 102-03] selbst widerlegt. Anthropomorphistische Auffassung von Gott und seinen Wirkungen steht durchaus nicht im Gegensatz zur koranischen Theologie."

2. "Tafsir" I, 236, et seq.

pared with most of the Muslim modernists, he is even remarkably tolerant. When it appears that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount are beyond his comprehension, being an outsider, he ought not to be upbraided. Besides, when now and then he does inveigh against the Christian articles of faith, it does not give the impression of being the outbrust of a man suffering from a feeling of inferiority, as is the case with many other Muslim apologists.

Chapter 7

ANALYSIS OF AHMAD KHAN'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

Ahmad Khan is always depicted by scholars of Islam as a rationalist and nothing more ;[1] and indeed, at first sight there is much that seems to confirm this opinion. A beloved and often repeated theme of his is this : " It is necessary that the rules of religious life which man has to obey should not exceed his reason . . . If they were to exceed his reason, man could no longer be made responsible for them, or rather it would be the same as charging oxen and asses with commands and prohibitions, or to appoint a stupid fellow to a high position."[2] Reading his Qur'ān-*tafsir* is tiresome because of the author's constant search for conceptions that require an explanation because they run counter to, and therefore may offend the rationalistic outlook of modern-minded people.[3] Yet, if one looks more closely, it is apparent that the theories of Ahmad Khan on religion try merely to flatter ' reason,' the fondling of nineteenth-century Western thought, whereas in several categories the critical function of reason is actually suspended. Thus the divine character of the Qur'ān provides immunity

1. H. A. Walter goes so far even as to call him " a thorough-going rationalist." ["The Ahmadiya Movement" (1918), p. 66.]

2. "Usul" II.

3. For other instances of rationalization already mentioned, see also his elucidation of the Qur'anic interdiction on eating pork [Chap. 4, sub-sec. 3 (c)], his theory of the process of revelation Chap. 4, sub.-sec. 3 (d)], his opinion concerning the hearing of prayer [Chap. 4, sub.-sec 3 (f) (3)], his view of Christ's crucifixion [end of last chap. (3)].

against the application of either literary or historical criticism, and its irrational prohibitions like that of wine-drinking[1] and the eating of pork are unquestioningly observed. Another *a priori* is that the picture of the Holy Prophet cannot bear any shadow of criticism. Furthermore, if reason were the only directing principle, why should the guidance of prophets still be needed? —an article of belief whose significance for Ahmad Khan is second only to that of *Tauhid* (Unity of God).

Another clear indication that Ahmad Khan cannot have been a wholehearted rationalist is that he never condemned the custom of *ziyarat* (visiting the tombs of saints), so popular amongst the Indian Muslims. On the contrary, he himself, especially towards the end of his life, went quite often to Sarhind for a visit to the tomb of Mujaddid[2] (the title of honour of the saint Shaikh Ahmed who was considered to have been the Reformer at the beginning of the second millennium after the Prophet).

It is this so-called "thorough-going" rationalist who wrote once to a friend: "Man cannot forget God. God Himself pursues us so tenaciously that even if we want to leave Him,

1. In the travel-account of his journey to England, Ahmad Khan relates that once, when he was seasick, a lady came to him and advised him: "... . take a small quantity of brandy as medicine: I will call the steward and tell him to bring you some. You will get well at once." I thanked her warmly, but said "I was unable to touch it." (Graham, 92.)

2. See H.J. 2, 547.

An elderly Muslim in India with ideas similar to those of Ahmad Khan explained to me in a letter this feature of the latter as follows: "You ask me why Sir Sayyid Ahmad, being an educated man and against all kinds of superstitions, used to visit the graves of Muslim saints. Well, you know me well. I am deadly against all kinds of superstition, but sometimes I too visit the graves of these Muslim saints. These Muslim saints, no doubt about it, were pious men . . . Today they are dead and gone; even their bones have become dust and dust has returned to dust. One day will come when we shall be reduced to dust like them; and these are the thoughts which make one's heart soft. And perhaps with such thoughts Sir Sayyid Ahmad visited the graves of these saints."

He does not leave us.' "[1]

For all these reasons we think that the most suitable qualification for Ahmad Khan's religious thought is that of 'rational supernaturalism,' i.e. "jenes merkwurdige Kompromissystem, das ein gottliches ubernaturliches Eingreifen innerhalb der Religiongeschichte nicht leugnet, aber den Inhalt des von Gott oder seinen Offenbarungstragern Offenbarten als notwendigerweise der Vernunft, der allgemeinen Erfahrung entsprechend hinstellt und von da aus die Offenbarungsauspruche einer Prufung unterzieht."[2] Thus, on one hand Ahmad Khan strives to prove that "no mystery attended the delivery of the Qur'ān,"[3] and drawing a parallel between the process of inner revelation and the state of people suffering from mental diseases, "who hear sounds though nobody is speaking, and see somebody near to them, though they are alone," he argues: "so it is not incompatible with human nature that revelations should descend to such a heart as has no concern for material things, but is turned toward spiritual instruction only."[4] On the other hand, the same Ahmad Khan rejects immediately the possibility of any organic inspiration,[5] fearing that thereby the passages in the Holy Word of God could be regarded as merely the words of Muhammad, which would diminish the purely divine character of the Qur'ān.

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1. H. J. 2, 547.

Also his speculations on free will [see sub-sec. 3 (f) (2), Chap. 4] bear more resemblance to the kasb-theories of orthodox Muslims (kasb-'acquiring,' i.e. one deed comes from two doers, one of whom creates it, namely God, while the other 'acquires' it, namely the man) than to the rationalistic free-will doctrine of Mu'tazilites who assume that man acts of his own accord, as otherwise God were unjust to make man responsible for his actions.

2. Zscharnack in "Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart²," I, 1809.

3. "Essay on the Holy Qu'ran," p. 1.

4. "Tafsir," I, 29.

5. See sub-sec. 3 (c), Chap. 4.

This rational supernaturalism of Ahmad Khan is only understandable against the background of his apologetic fervour. In a speech, delivered in Lahore on the 1st Febr. 1884, he explains that the most urgent need of the Muslims of his day is that: "Today we are, as before (i.e. when Islam came into close contact with the Greek world of ideas), in need of a modern *'ilm al-kalam*, by which we should either refute the doctrines of modern sciences or undermine their foundations, or show that they are in conformity with the articles of Islamic faith . . . (and) when I endeavour to propagate those sciences amongst the Muslims, which I have just stated, disagree with the (tenets of) present-day Islam, then it is my duty to defend as much as I can the religion of Islam, right or wrong, and to reveal to the people the original bright face of Islam. My conscience tells me that if I should not do so, I would stand as a sinner before God."[1] In other words, Ahmad Khan did not wish to start a new Islamic sect or school, which was one of the common charges of his adversaries who liked to call him a Nechari, but *he considered as his sacred duty apologetics in behalf of Islam.*

On account of the apologetic character of his religious ideas one must clearly discriminate between the reforming aspirations of the *Wahabi*, the *Ahl-i-Hadith* and those of Ahmad Khan. Both of them preach a return to 'original Islam.' But only the people of the former group are really puritanical, i.e. they set themselves to remove from Islam accretions such as borrowings from Hinduism, while our reformer constructed an ideal projection of Islam, in which all that was conformable to the spirit of the age was qualified as 'genuine' and all that contradicted it was styled as 'foreign' and put aside. The former were chiefly interested in a religious revival, while the latter strove first of all after a social, economical and

1. "Majmu'a" I, 210.

cultural uplift of his co-religionists with the motto: The more worldly progress we make, the more glory Islam gains.

Another thing that ought to be borne in mind is that the primary motive for Ahmad Khan's apologetics was not the thought that because of the merciless criticism of European Orientalists the reputation of Islam was at stake (though it may have been an afterthought), but rather that the young Muslims who received English education and had to absorb the enlightened ideas of the West, would lose their faith in Islam and its teachings. In the Preface of his first important apologetic writing: *A Series of Essays on the Life of Muhammad* (1870),[1] he explicitly declares that this "work was especially

1. This work, composed by Ahmad Khan during his stay in London, was meant as a refutation of Muir's "Life of Mahomet," which, according o Hali, had made a deep impression on the English-educated Muslims, because "Sir W. Muir had not adopted the worn-out methods by which the missionaries criticized Islam and which were never successful . . . but he argued with historical facts." H. J 2, 142-43).

Perhaps the most remarkable instance of apologetics in this book of Ahmad Khan is this contention: "The greatest of all boons conferred by Islam upon Christianity is the spirit of resistance which it breathed into the Christians against the exorbitant power of the Popes under which they had so long groaned . . . when he (i.e. Luther) came in contact with the passage of the Qur'an quoted above (i.e. S. 3 : 57), which the author renders as follows: 'Say, O ye who have received the Scriptures, come to a just determination between us and you—that we worship not any besides God, and associate no creature with Him, and that the one of us take not the other for Lords (the High Priests and the Popes) besides God,' he at once comprehended the truth it inculcated, and, clearly perceiving the slavish and degrading position in which his co-religionists were plunged, at once stood up to preach publicly against the servile practice." ("Essay on the Question Whether Islam has been Beneficial or Injurious to Human Society in General, and to the Mosaic and Christian Dispensations," pp. 39-40.) However fantastic this assertion may sound, yet there is a little truth in it, i.e. Luther did indeed make a special study of Islam (cf. H. Vosberg, "Luthers Kritik aller Religionen," p 91 : "Zunachst is Luthers Eifer festzustellen zulassige Nachrichten uber den Islam sich zu verschaffen"). But for a long time his knowledge of the Qur'an was very weak and at second hand. So he acknowledges in his "Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcarum" (1529): "Plura forte dicam, si quando mihi ipse Mahometus Alcoranusque suus in manus venerit." Not before 1542, i e. 23 years after the "Leipziger Disputation" in which he denounced papacy, was this wish fulfilled!

intended for the use of those Muhammadan youths who are pursuing their English studies," i.e. this book had not primarily the intention of convincing the European public of the fine qualities of Muhammad and his religion. Because of his ardour to save Muslim youth from apostasy, one of his greatest grievances against al Ghazālī was that the latter states in his *Tafriqa bain al-Islam wa'l-Zandaqa* that it is detrimental to religion to discuss the Resurrection. Against this Ahmad Khan argues that "nowadays even people whom the Imām (i.e. Ghazālī calls 'the mass' are acquainted with (the views of) Science, and because of this doubts arise in the hearts of those Muslims with regard to the Resurrection . . . They regard the return of the spirit to dead bodies as impossible, and think it an absurd idea that the sorrows and joys at the Day of Resurrection would be the same as those experienced in this world . . . So it would be deterimental to religion *not* to discuss the Resurrection,"[1] that is to explain its symbolism in terms compatible with modern thought.

In brief, one can trace a direct relation between Ahmad Khan's educational work and his apologetic efforts, i.e. in consequence of the introduction of modern knowledge into Muslim India, he was charged with the task of procuring also a new interpretation of Islam which would make it possible for the Muslim youth to remain faithful to their religious convictions. Therefore Qur'ānic conceptions and teachings were newly formulated in terms of the rationalist-thinking Western world.

Although a reformer, Ahmad Khan continued to be a faithful and conscientious Muslim until the last; one who deemed it unnecessary to keep the divine origin of Islam unassailed. Thus the ultimate synthesis of these two tendencies that characterized his thought can well be termed rational supernaturalism, in spite of the obvious dislike Ahmad Khan usually showed for all that

1. "Al-Nazr" (1899), p. 92.

seemed to be supernatural.

The last question to be settled is this: From where did our author derive material for his theories?

It is obvious that he adopted deistic and naturalistic notions from Europe, but it is much harder to lay the finger on specific works which he must have employed for developing his own views. Quotations from English authors are rare in his writings. Furthermore, his study of Western ideas cannot have been very extensive on account of difficulty with the English language which he never fully mastered.[1] Yet there is at least one clear clue which leads to one of the sources of Ahmad Khan's ideas. Our reformer knew the work *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* of Th. Carlyle,[2] from which he cites passages in his *Essays on the Life of Muhammad.* In this work of Carlyle one meets i.a. these significant dicta: "A man must conform himself to Nature's laws, *be* verily in communion with Nature and the truth of things,"[3] and "To us also, through every star, through every blade of grass, is not a God made visible, if we will open our minds and eyes?"[4] Then he must have been acquainted with Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* and striking is the parallel between

1. Whilst in England his son Sayyid Mahmud rendered him valuable services in this respect, and it is an open secret that the latter translated the "Essays on the Life of Muhammad" into English. In India especially his Urdu-knowing English friends G. F. I. Graham and Sir Auckland Colvin helped him with problems of the English language. But still his defective knowledge of English must have been a great handicap for the acquirement of a true picture of European thought. It may be assumed, therefore, that most of his information about it came from secondary sources, i.e. from what English-educated Muslims and British friends told him.

2. Ahmad Khan once even had a talk with this author; see Graham, p. 65: "He had an interview with Carlyle, and the Chelsea Sage was unsually gracious to him. They talked long and earnestly over "Heroes and Hero-Worship" especially about Muhammad, for whom Carlyle expresses a very high regard in that work; and also about Syed Ahmed's 'Essays on the Life of Mohammed,' then in the press."

3. P. 69 in the third ed. of 1846.

4. Ibid. p. 15.

Ahmad Khan's definition of God's nature (see supra p. 66), and the account Gibbon gives of Muhammad's concept of God, viz. as " an infinite and eternal being, without form or place, without issue or similitude, present to our most secret thoughts, existing by the necessity of his own nature."[1]

As for probable Arabic and Persian sources it appears that Ahmad Khan uses the writings of Muslim authors in only two ways, viz. either to demonstrate by them how absurd and childish were the notions Muslim commentators and divines formerly held, or to prove that in fact his own views were not so revolutionary as it might seem, since Mr. so and so had already professed similar opinions. In the first case it is mostly the *al-Tafsir al-Kabir* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī which must serve as a pattern for the irrational notions which Islamic scholars had in former days[2]; while, on the other hand, it is particularly Shāh Walī Ullāh[3] whose works are often cited with approval. Thus Ahmad Khan claims that "properly speaking it can be said that Shāh Walī also denies miracles . . . In the *Tafhimat* he writes: 'Reality consists of different strata (*maqamat*). One such stratum comprises the chain of cause and effect.' In our opinion there is evidence that the relation of cause and effect is never interrupted ; nor will one ever find any power

1. These lines of Gibbon's book are quoted in the Preface of the "Essays on the Life of Muhammad" ; but only as a favourable opinion given by a European on Muhammad are they cited there.

2. Cf. end of sub-sec. 2, Chap. 4.

3. An instructive article on this reformer of the first half of the 18th century in Delhi was published by Hasan al-Ma'sumi in "The Islamic Culture" of Oct. 1947. This article makes Ahmad Khan's preference for Shah Wali Ullah quite understandable, for there is recorded in it i a. "He (i.e. the latter) was fully convinced of this fact, that once the conception of the Muslims about the teachings of the Qur'an was put on a sound rational basis, all other reforms, economic or otherwise, would follow as the night follows the day . . . He realized in his heart of hearts that in order to raise his decadent community a critical and intelligent study of 'Hadith' was essential as a supplement to that of the Qur'an . . . (he) denounced in the strongest terms possible the Taqlid Jamid, blind following, of any of the 'Madhahib-i-Arba'ah,' the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence."

to alter the way of God.[1] There is nothing more to it than this, that the miracles of prophets and saints are founded upon causes, but the effect is represented in its full blown state (and omits the series of progressive causes that logically lead to it), and therein they differ from all other phenomena.' "[2] If one knows that twenty-three pages previous to the one on which this reference from the *Tafhimat* occurs, Ahmad Khan admitted that the Shah believed that prophets could perform miracles,[3] then it becomes evident from the way that the quotation is applied (or misapplied ?) that to him the works of other Muslims were more useful as stores from which to procure evidence to substantiate his theories than as sources from which to develop them.

But that does not alter the fact that indeed many, or rather most, of the ideas of Ahmad Khan had already been expressed by other Muslims. To give some examples[4] :

(1) The existence of a kind of laws of Nature was already propounded by al-Jāhiz (d. 255 A.H.) ; see al-Shahrastānī : "and besides this he (i.e. al-Jāhiz) stated that bodies have their own nature . . . and he ascribed to them actions peculiar to them."[5]

(2) Disbelief in wonders is already reported from the Mu'tazilite Hishām b. 'Amr al-Fuwatī ; see al-Maqrīzī : "he denied to Moses the cleavage of the sea and the change of a staff into a serpent, and to Jesus the quickening of the dead, with the permission of God, and to the Prophet the splitting of

1. A phrase of the Qur'an : S. 33 : 62.
2. " Tafsir" 3, 36-37.
3. Ibid. 3, 13.
4. These examples of views that agree with ideas of Ahmad Khan are not mentioned in the works of the latter, but they may illustrate how flexible and productive Islamic thought has been since the days of Muhammad, to the extent that it is almost impossible for a Muslim of to-day to suggest anything that is really "new under the Muslim sun."
5. " K. al-Milal wa'l-Nihal" 1, 52 (ed. Cureton).

M. Horten exclaims on account of such views of al-Jahiz : " Der Islam wird damit zu einer rein naturlichen Religion gemacht." (" Die philosophischen Systeme der Speculativen Theologen im Islam," p. 326.)

the moon."[1]

(3) The heretical view that the Qur'ān is not exceptional on account of its rhetoric had been already professed by Abū Mūsā 'Isā b. Sabīh, known as al-Muzdār; see al-Maqrīzī: "he thought that people can produce a similar and even a better style and eloquence than that of the Qur'ān."[2]

(4) The association of angels and devils with man's good qualities and evil instincts was already suggested by the Ikhwān al-Safā; see F. Dieterici, *Die Philisophie der Araber im 9 und 10 Jahrhundert n. Chr.* Part 4 (which deals with the writings of the Ikhwān al-Safā), p. 147: "Die lobenswerthen Charaktere werden mit den Engeln, die tadelswerthen aber mit dem Satan in Beziehung gesetzt."

Summarizing one may state that Ahmad Khan's undaunted confrontation of Islam with modern thought and his original method of Qur'ānic exegesis inspired by Western ideas was no less than a revolution in the history of Muslim theology, but that probably except in three cases only,[3] he has not actually added new theories to Muslim dogmatics.

1. "Al-Mawa'iz wa'l-I'tibar" 2, 347.
2. Ibid. 2, 346.
3. Viz. for the Qur'anic teaching regarding slavery, the crucifixion of Christ and the "du'a" and its response.

EPILOGUE

The influence of Ahmad Khan on his times is most perceptible and tangible in the domain of education. The crown of his life's work, the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, stands firm as a living symbol of his amazing perseverance, astounding courage and great foresight. Here the young Muslim elite imbibe European culture and knowledge, and in this institution which has an atmosphere all its own, the characters of those who are expected to become pillars of the nation are shaped.

Yet without desiring to belittle the importance of what he has done for the education of his nation, we still believe that his significance for his age reaches above his educational achievements. *The everlasting and greatest benefit of Ahmad Khan for his country is that he restored the Muslim to faith in himself.* He showed his sorely humiliated and despairing co-religionists that there was hope and a future if the available forces were united, and their eyes were turned to the fine opportunities the West had to offer him who would learn from it. And the main significance of the foundation of the Aligarh College was not primarily that the institutions for higher education in India were increased by one, and not even that it was a great improvement on the existing ones, but that it was for the Indian Muslims a tangible expression of self-help !

Also at the moment Indian Islam is unthinkable without Ahmad Khan, and the self-consciousness and energy of present-day Pakistan are essentially the ultimate consequence of the stimulation and inspiration which his magnetic personality gave to his indolent community. We cannot agree, therefore, with

those voices which, nowadays, in the flush of recently gained independence, are heard in India proclaiming that Ahmad Khan was not only a willing tool in the hands of British imperialists, but even that "he had directed the footsteps of the Musalmans along ways that fostered in them a slavish mentality instead of self-respect, high-mindedness and breadth of political outlook."[1] Indeed it is true that repeatedly he bridled the national passions of the Muslims, and that "political agitation, especially in alliance with the Hindus, was to him wandering in the dangerous fields of sterile emotionalism."[2] But his aloofness from political affairs, so incomprehensible to the India of today, was exactly a proof of his political wisdom and his sense of realism.[3] For India, and particularly for Muslim India of his day, patience and self-restraint, combined with a keen eye for what were in the given circumstances the possible, i.e. the spiritual, means for the preparation for future self-rule, were certainly more urgently required than the stirring up of a futile second Mutiny, a nightmare which haunted Ahmad Khan all his life. Moreover, backward Muslim India needed time. It had much lost ground to make up, and its interests would have been badly served by too fast a pace toward obtaining self-government.

In close relation to his educational work stood his efforts to introduce religious reforms, and they were a direct extension of it. He recognized that the diffusion of Western knowledge would involve an irreparable split in the religious life and con-

1. Mahadeva Desai, "Maulana Abul Kalam Azad" (1941), p. 43.

2. H. Kraemer, Islam in India Today, "Moslem World" (1931), p. 158.

3. In this connection it is not out of place to cite the following passage from an address by Muhammad 'Ali, the Muslim president of the National Congress (sic !) in 1925: "Reviewing the actions of a bygone generation today, when it is easier to be wise after the event, I must confess I still think the attitude of Syed Ahmad Khan was eminently wise, and much as I wish that some things which he had said should have been left unsaid, I am constrained to admit that no well-wisher of Musalmans, nor of India as a whole, could have followed a very different course in leading the Musalmans."

victions of the young Muslims, or perhaps even arouse indifference towards religion and consequently start a process of secularization if it were not simultaneously accompanied by a modern version of Islam. This brought it about that our reformer who was a theologian neither by profession, nor by nature, must discuss Islamic fundamentals for the sake of apology in view of the rationalistic outlook of nineteenth-century scholarship in Europe. To secure this end he reconstructed the 'original and pure Islam,' in which all 'non-genuine' elements, i.e. all that was incompatible with the spirit of his times, were imputed to the baleful influences of Jews and Christians and the impact of Greek *Weltanschauung*.

Unfortunately his reforming endeavours in the field of religion were much less successful than they were in the domain of education. Never did he get an actual hold on his people when he tried to persuade them of the necessity of adjusting the interpretation of Islamic doctrines and the application of the injunctions in the divine Law to modern thought and society.[1] Even many of his most competent and attached co-operators held aloof with regard to his religious views. The greatest difficulty in putting aside their religious feelings in favour of their appreciation of Ahmad Khan's work for the nation was felt by Nazīr Ahmad,[2] Muhsin al-Mulk[3] and Shiblī.[4] The

1. Cf., e.g. the complaint of the Indian modernist S. Khuda Bukhsh, uttered 29 years after the death of Ahmad Khan: "Evidently it is a sin—unpardonable, inexpiable—to mention a heresy, even if it be one against an orthodox opinion based on a nursery tale and sustained by coffee-house gossip." ("Studies, Indian and Islamic," p. 77.)

2. For the attitude towards Ahmad Khan and his religious thought of this member of the Aligarh group and advocate of education for girls, see supra p. 15, note 3.

3. The theological position of this man can easily be ascertained from the correspondence he had with Ahmad Khan because of the views stated in his "Qur'an-tafsir," and as mentioned supra, Chap. 5 (4).

4. This historian, who deservedly stood in high repute, clung to a belief in the miracles of Muhammad, but based them, as far as possible, on

position of Hālī[1] is not quite clear, because evidently he keeps his criticism of his venerated hero to himself. By setting up as bright and spotless the character of its great chief he intended to incite the latent powers in the Muslim community. Thus he seems to have thought it more advisable to smooth over Ahmad Khan's shortcomings and objectionable ideas than to show them up. Nevertheless one may assume that on the whole he could agree with the theological opinions of his master. The only supporter of mark, however, who accepted unreservedly his religious teachings was Chirāgh 'Alī.[2] He literally copied the theories of our reformer, and it is because of ignorance of the latter's ideas, that the 'originality' of this pupil of his usually is overrated.

When seeking the reasons why Ahmad Khan did not achieve the hoped-for results in his religious reforms, it ought to be pointed out that he was absorbed by a desire to do away with supernatural concepts, obsolete customs and prohibition orders to such an extent that his innate tact and insight into human character failed him when he wanted to propagate enlightened views and to carry out his fixed purposes. It would have been preferable if he had shown equal prudence in amending popular notions of the ordinary Muslims as Muhammad 'Ahduh displayed in Egypt when, at the same time, the latter

rational grounds. "Sir Sayyid approached Islam from the values of the modern West; Shibli approached Western values from the viewpoint of Islam." (W. C. Smith, "Modern Islam in India," p. 40).

1. He is the national poet of the Indian Muslims, and in his famous threnody "Musaddas" he makes a strong appeal to them by contrasting the glorified past of the Muslim empire in Spain and Baghdad with the prevailing languor.

2. One of the main contributors of the "Tahzib-al-Akhlaq." He propagated the socio-religious views of his teacher in an instructive work entitled "The Proposed Political, Legal and Social Reforms in the Ottoman Empire and other Mohammadan States" (1883). A refutation of the opinions expressed in another work of his called "A Critical Exposition of the Popular Jihad" (1885) one meets in the D.D. thesis of the Dutch scholar H. Th. Obbink, "De Helige Oorlog volgens den Koran" (The Holy War according to the Qur'an), (1901).

had to accomplish a similar mission.[1] And it would have been wiser if, for instance, he had omitted to organize a lottery for the collection of money for the College,[2] in view of the express interdiction of gambling in the Qur'ān. Because of his apologetic zeal he has thrown away the baby with the wash-water, i.e. in his efforts to purify Islamic faith from elements contradictory to the spirit of his age, he went so far that unintentionally he even caused the genuine and pure belief of the Muslims to waver by failing to supply a spiritual substitute for the cherished sacred things, of which he wanted to deprive his co-religionists. Consequently, they felt unconsciously that they would fall into a religious vacuum, if they were to adopt his doctrines. In this connection one should remember that he was merely a theologian in his spare time, and not by profession ; his notes on Sūrat al-Fātiha present a good illustration of it. While the *Umm al-Kitab* invites almost every commentator to explain how all the essential points of Muslim belief are expressed in its seven verses, one meets nothing of it in Ahmad Khan's comment. Instead of it a discourse on his favourite topic 'Prayer and Answer' and a sermon delivered against the 'Ulama, "the people upon whom wrath lies (*al-maghdub 'alaihim*), who do not bring into action the latent powers (in man), nor try to do so, and who are restrained in their understanding by the traditions of their country, town,

1. E.g. with regard to the concept of the nature of angels, Muhammad 'Abduh does not, like Ahmad Khan, declare bluntly that all views except the allegorical conception of it are absurd, but he restricts himself cautiously to an undecided "nescio" ; see his "Tafsir al-Manar," I, 254: "People have investigated the substance of angels and they have tried to form some conception of it, but only to a few has God given information about this secret ; for everyone religion is extant as a path of life ; so the right thing is to be content with faith in the unseen world, without investigating its nature, as it is nearly an impossible task for men to investigate it and to have knowledge about it, and when God singles out a person to have more knowledge about it, then it is a favour of His He grants to whom He wills."

2. Cf. H. J. I, 201.

ancestors, and are overpowered by the force of inherited things." From the Christian viewpoint the failure of this zealous defender of the honour of Islam is, after all, to be put down to his neglect of the basic truth that "real religion, in the sense of the opening up of divine life and reality in human life, is not in need of being justified and reconciled to the standard of prevailing ideas and ideals, but is itself the standard by which all ideas and ideals are criticized."[1]

From one side, however, Ahmad Khan's religious ideas met with understanding : in the quarters of the present-day defenders of Islam his teachings echo unmistakably. This can be clearly proved from the two best known works of modern Indian apology for Islam, viz. from the principal work of Sayyid Amīr 'Alī,[2] *The Spirit of Islam*; and from the English translation of the Qur'ān with notes of Maulawī Muhammad 'Alī.

The Spirit of Islam (1922) is, it should be stated, a recast and amplified edition of a book of Amīr 'Alī written at an early age called *A Critical Examination of the Life and Teachings of Mohammed* (1873). This work came under the direct influence of Ahmad Khan's *Essays on the Life of Muhammad*, published three years before. This influence is most apparent in the liberal views one finds stated in the *Critical Examination* with respect to the social injunctions of Muhammad.[3] But

1. H. Kraemer, "Moslem World," (1931), p. 167.

2. He knew Ahmad Khan, and met him in India as well as in England. But in spite of common progressive views they could not get on well together The former wished more political action on the part of the Muslims, especially directed against the Hindus, than the latter approved. Moreover, the former seemed not to have been completely devoid of jalousie de metier.

3. Cf. p. 194: "It must be remembered that many of the sumptuary regulations, precepts, and prohibitions of Muhammad were called forth by the temporary circumstances of the times and the people. With the disappearance of such circumstances the need for those laws disappeared. The people, therefore, whether Muslim or not, who suppose that every Islamic precept is necessarily immutable, do injustice to history and the development of the intellect of man."

while in this book, belonging to his youth, the author makes more than one reference to the *Essays* and the *Tahzib al-Akhlaq*, he seems at the maturer age to free himself from the obligation to acknowledge his indebtedness to his forerunner, and thus many of the views he presents in his *Spirit of Islam* as his own have in fact proceeded from a much greater genius.

It is interesting to trace what material from Ahmad Khan's Qur'ān-commentary has been worked up in the commentary of Muhammad 'Alī ![1] One discovers in it i.a. the rationalized meaning of *ayat* as ' divine message, or communication ' (p. 28 : note 67)[2]; the statement that the blowing of the trumpet on the Last Day is a metaphor hinting at the great gathering on that day (p. 303; note 789)[3] ; the assumption that the Deluge in the days of Noah did not cover the whole surface of the earth (p. 461 ; note 1180)[4] and that the Qur'ān does not anywhere state that Jonah was devoured by the fish (p. 876; note 2123),[5] etc.

Yet the theological attitude of Muhammad 'Alī should be defined as a phase of development after that of Ahmad Khan. Granted that the religious thought of the former has much

1. The full title of this commentary is : " The Holy Qur'an, containing the Arabic text with English translation and commentary." (2nd ed. 1920).

Muhammad 'Ali belongs to the Lahore Party of the Ahmadiyyah movement. In distinction from the other group, the Qadian Party, it does not acknowledge Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as a "nabi " (Prophet), and considers him to be merely a " muhaddath " (i.e. a person spoken to by God though not raised to the dignity of a prophet).

2. Cf. with the opinion of Ahmad Khan : Chap. 5 (3).

From the list of abbreviations in the Preface of his commentary it appears that Muhammad 'Ali made use of the " Tafsir " of Ahmad Khan, but in not one of the above-quoted views of his corresponding with those of Ahmad Khan, the author refers to that Tafsir !

3. See Chap. 4, sub-sec. 3 (c).

4. See Chap. 4, sub-sec. 2, para. 2.

5. See Chap. 4, sub-sec. 3 (c), para. 10.

in common with that of the latter, it still bears its own specific stamp, for at the same time it breathes the spirit of the religious father of the author, viz. that of Mīrzā Ghulām Ahmad, who was expert in explaining the inner sense of Islamic institutions and Qur'ānic notions. The fortunate result of this curious mixture in the mind of Muhammad 'Alī of Ghulām Aḥmad's spiritualism and Ahmad Khan's rationalism is that the author of this English Qur'ān-commentary supplies desupernaturalized Islam, as it is represented in the religion of Ahmad Khan, with substantial content. Thus, e.g., he gives the *mi'raj*, which he too supposes to be merely a vision of Muhammad, a positive purport by an inner motivation like this: "The opening reference (i.e. of S. 17) is to the *Mi'raj*, or the spiritual Ascension of the Holy Prophet, which must be interpreted as referring to the eminence which the Holy Prophet was to achieve and to the greatness to which Islam was to rise" (p. 560). But even beyond the apologetic literature the thought of our reformer makes itself felt. Abul Kalām Āzād is not exactly an adherent of the Aligarh school, and certainly in his *tafsir* he shows much more reserve towards rationalization than his predecessor. He does not, for instance, explain away angels, jinns and the signs of the Last Day, and lets most of the miraculous stores in the Qur'ān stand. Notwithstanding that an unacknowledged use of Ahmad Khan's commentary can be recognized in his explanatory version of S. 2 : 6 which runs as follows: 'Strike him (who was the real murderer) with some (members) of the killed man (if this happens, the truth will be revealed and the murderer will be known),' (*Tarjuman al-Qur'an*, Vol. I, p. 239). Secondly, Āzād's tolerant attitude towards Christianity is completely in the line of the author of *Tabyin al-Kalam*, and without doubt Āzād would have met the latter's approval when stating: 'In fact no fundamental difference does exist between the teachings of Jesus and the Qur'ān. The principle of the injunctions of both of them is the same. The only difference is the adorned wording (or Jesus's

commands) and the circumstances under which the exposition had to be given. Jesus merely emphasizes moral life and purification of the soul; for the law of Moses was present and of it he wished to alter not even a comma. The Qur'ān, on the contrary, must explain ethics and law simultaneously' (*Tarjuman al-Qur'an*, Vol. I, pp. 109-110). For Āzād's *tafsir* see my article in *The World of Islam*, Vol. II, nr. 2, 1952).

Further, Ahmad Khan's concept of *naskh* has met with a response, and it seems one hears him arguing when it is said: 'Naskh in Qur'ānic sense means abrogation or amendment of the previous Scriptures and nothing more. It does not by any means imply self-stultification of the Qur'ān by incorporating contradictory verses cancelling one another' (Sheikh 'Abdul Subhān in *The Islamic Literature*, Oct. 1952, p. 29). The same view is held by Ahmad al-Dīn who concludes with reference to the words *la rib fihi* (S. 2 : 1) that 'in a perfect book no verse can be abrogated' (*Bayan lil-nas*, 1935, p. 32).

Also Ahmad Khan's famous adage: 'The Word of God (Qur'ān) must be in harmony with the Work of God (Nature),' is faithfully adopted by Ahmad al-Dīn.[1] On p. 103 of the introduction of his commentary, *Bayan lil-nas*, is stated: 'The Qur'ān is the Word of God and the Book of Creation is the Work of God . . . Therefore that explanation of the Qur'ān is completely right which is impressed either with the *ayat* of the Qur'ān itself or with the *ayat* of the Book of Creation.' This exegetic rule is ingeniously applied to S. 4 : 169. The 'Word' which is conveyed into Mary is said to be 'sperm,' for all the works of the Book of Creation are Words of God. And sperm is such a wonderful work! (See *Bayan lil-nas*, p. 411). In this way no belief in a Virgin Birth is required. The same

1. For the same view see also al-Mashriqi's statement: "There is no doubt that the canons in that Book (the Qur'an) are originated from the instruction of the Book of God, i e. the Book of Nature. And undoubtedly its canons confirm what happens in the Custom (of God)." [al-Tazkirah (1924), I, 84].

commentator concurs also with Ahmad Khan's view of an actually crucified Christ who, however, did not die on the cross. Only his argument differs. 'God raised him (Jesus) up unto Himself' (S. 4 : 156) is interpreted by him as going to a place where God is mercy and cure is found. And this would indicate that the disciples have taken Christ from the cross, senseless, but not dead (see *Bayan*, p. 642).

Ahmad Khan's religion was too much stripped of the *sensus numinis* (sense of a transcendental world) to find acceptance. With his death and particularly with the death of his opponents, his *Tafsir* was buried in oblivion, so that without danger later apologetes could borrow from his ideas whatever suited their purpose. But the simple fact that other English-writing Indian scholars, who clothed his religious views in a more acceptable form, have met a very wide circle of readers proves that this great Indian reformer has not lived, nor *thought* in vain.

THE END

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} cf. pp. 59-62

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al Nazr (1879; 2nd ed. 1899) Urdu versions of passages from works of al-Ghazālī with critical annotations.

Tafsir al-Qur'an (Part 1: 1880; part 2: 1882; part 3: 1885; part 4: 1888; part 5: 1892; part 6: 1895). Commented are Sura 1-17.

Tariqat al Salat (1887). This deals with the forms of daily prayers according to the Hanafī school.

Asrar al Salat (1888) ('Mysteries of prayer').

Tarqim fi Qissat i Ashab al-Kahf (1889) ('Brochure on the story of the Seven Sleepers').

Izahat al-Ghain'an Zu 'l-Qarnain (1890) ('Removal of the cloud from Alexander the Great').

Tafsir al-Jinn wal-Jann (1892); cf. pp. 75-76.

Khalq al-Insan (1892) (' Creation of man ').
al-Du'a wa'l-Istijaba (1892) ; cf. pp. 85-86.
Tahrir fi Usul al-Tafsir (1892) ; cf. p. 96, note 2.
Ibtal i Ghulami (1893); cf. pp. 37-38. In 1895 an Arabic version of it appeared.
Tafsir al-Samawat (1897) (' Exegesis of the heavenly bodies ').

(2) *Historical works and treatises*

Jam i-Jam (1840). A short description of the royal families of the Mughal Empire.
Athar al-Sanadid (1847) : cf. p. 6.
Silsilat al-Muluk (1852). Chronological tables of the rulers of India over a period of 5 millennia. This list is added to the second edition of the *Athar*.
Tarikh i Sarkashi i dil'a Bijnaur (1858) (' Account of the Mutiny in the district of Bijnore ').
Asbab i Baghawat i Hind (1858) ; cf. p. 19.
Tarikh i Firuzshahi (1862). A revision of the history of the Kings of Delhi from 1261 up till 1357 by Dayā al-Dīn Barani.

(3) *Miscellanea*

Sirat i Faridiyyah. Life of his maternal grandfather Farīd al-Dīn.
Tahsil fi Jarr al-Thaqil (1844) (' Introduction to Mechanics ') ; transl. of a Persian treatise.
Fawa'id al-Afkar fi I'mal al-Firjar (1846) (' Advices for the use of compasses'). This is a version of a Persian manuscript, written by his maternal grandfather. Ahmad Khan provided it with examples from his own.
Qaul Matin dar Ibtal i Harakat i Zamin (1848, not 1865 which is an error) ; cf. p. 59, note 1.
A'in i Akbari (1856) ; cf. p. 7.

Shukriyyah (1859). Thanksgiving offered up by the Muslims of Muradabad to Queen Victoria on the 20th of July, 1859.

Risalat i Khair-khawahan Musalman (1860) (' Account of the loyal Muslims ') ; cf. p 21.

Review on the book of Dr. Hunter (1872) ; cf. pp. 25-26.

Hindustan ke Tariq i Ta'lim par I'tiradat (1872) (' Criticism of the educational system in India ').

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(b) Writings dealing with Ahmad Khan's Life and Work

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